

BASAVI SYSTEM IN ANDHRA PRADESH

(With Special Reference to Kurnool District)

Dissertation submitted to
SRI KRISHNADEVARAYA UNIVERSITY, ANANTAPUR
in partial fulfilment for the
award of the degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
HISTORY


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October, 1990

CERTIFICATE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My felicity knows no bounds in recording my deep sense of gratitude to Prof. B.R.Gopal, M.A., Ph.D., Department of History, S.K.University, Anantapur, who has extended his maximum help in the selection of the topic and who took meticulous care in putting me on the right track during the process of my work. The work would not have been completed without his immeasurable and timely guidance and valuable suggestions. Further, I am also thankful to Mrs. Padma Gopal for her affection and hospitality. I would be unfaithful, if I do not express my gratitude to the respondents and some of the key informants like J.Sarala and officials of Social Welfare Department and S.C. and S.T. Corporation of Kurnool District.

Further, I am thankful to Dr.Shrinivas Ritti for sending me some valuable material on dēvadāsi system. I also acknowledge all possible help received from my colleagues and research scholars of the Department of History, S.K.University, Anantapur.

Finally, I am grateful to Sri. M.Srinivasa Babu, who took much care in typing this dissertation very neatly.

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C O N T E N T S

Sl. No.	CHAPTER	Page No.
1.	THE AIM AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY	1
2.	ORIGIN OF THE <u>DĒVADĀSI</u> SYSTEM	8
3.	ANTIQUITY OF THE <u>BASAVI</u> SYSTEM	20
4.	<u>BASAVI</u> SYSTEM IN ANDHRA PRADESH	71
5.	WELFARE MEASURES FOR THE REHABILITATION OF <u>BASAVIS</u>	110
6.	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	137
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	146
	APPENDIX	I to V

CHAPTER I

THE AIM AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The dēvadāsi system has a hoary antiquity. This term could be translated generally as women in the service of God. As shown below, this system is not peculiar to any region, although in nomenclature and typology there are differences. In the nomadic period when there was no organised family system the dēvadāsi system had no relevance. Because in those ages of the past woman was considered a chattel and beast of burden. Till the family system came into existence, there was no possessiveness either in men or women; when the nomads were going from place to place the policy followed was each for all and all for each. But centuries later when organised society came into existence the concept of possessiveness also came into being. This led to the setting up of individual families.

Likewise, even with regard to the concept of God it has been thought that it was more out of fear than logic that those people started venerating God, specially the natural Gods. When they started worshipping these Gods they inherently thought that like themselves the God too needed all that

a human being desired. Slowly small shrines came to be set up for these Gods. Whenever they performed festivals they associated these Gods also with them. Be it a ritual of birth or of death, Gods mingled with men.

Those that could afford indulged themselves in lust surrounded by women of beauty who also served them. Whatever might be the reason, the women that so served slowly came to be considered as belonging to a separate and distinct class of society. Some of them dedicated all their lives in the service of their masters who maintained them. They slowly became accomplished in dancing and such other fine arts, so that even in the temple ritual offering music and dance as part of service to the Gods became a feature. This system of offering themselves as devotees to God and to their own masters in the mundane life was not confined to anyone region or country but assumed universal proportions as we shall see below with several regional variations. This system was in vogue right from the earliest periods of history in different parts of the world.

In one sense this system may be dated back to a period when organised societies and worship of the dead and also of God came into existence. Besides the service motive, there

were also other reasons for such a system which had dug itself deep into the society as social systems. In India this system was in vogue from quite an early period and it took different names and followed different customs depending upon the regional vagaries. But almost always this was a system that was associated with the institution of a temple. The records in Kannada and Telugu, for example, speak of angaranga-bhōga i.e., the luxury of the physic and the luxury of the hall, the so called dancing hall. Several inscriptions specially of the Vijayanagara period refer to raṅga-mandapās i.e, structures (mandapas) specially meant for such entertainments like dance and sometimes drama. It came to be a part of the temple ritual and for the presiding deity; saṅgīta (music) and nritya (dance) were offered to please the deity. (saṅgītam avadharaya, nrityam avadharaya). Slowly these womenfolk came to be considered as sūles, a term which in common parlance acquired a derogatory meaning and came to be used as a term referring to such of those women who did not enjoy a status in society. Often, it came to be used as a word of abuse.

However, the term sūle stood for a profession or service and the service was an organised one. There was an officer in the early and medieval periods of Karnataka called sūlevāla,

who managed such services as providing with food and clothing through permanent grants. They lived in the locality near the temples and such localities came to be designated as sūle-kēri or sūle-gēri. Inscriptions from the 7th century to the late 15th and 16th centuries show that this term stands for a young girl, commissioned for regularly offering the services of music and dance, recitation of the Vēdas and the Purāṇās, singing songs and enactment of episodes at the time of worshipping once, twice or even three times a day (trikāla-pūja). Those that offered such services were looked after by providing them land, money and residential quarters. There were several types of artists like sugāyaka-pratati (group of good singers), maddaḷigas (drummers), savagāṇe (co-singers) and vamsakāras (flute players). When we look into the temples of the past we see that for providing such services specially halls like raṅgamaṇḍapas were built. This was normally a quadrangle and the number of pillars herein depended upon the size of the hall itself. The dancers would stand, each one of them against a pillar and they were the girls who came to be known as kāmbada sūleyaru. They were also referred to as kāmbadavaru. Sometimes, each pillar was designated after one sūle. Thus, 'Chalabbeya kamba' indicated that it was the pillar where the lady, chalabbe was to stand before and after the performance of the dance. Thus, the term sūle did not in

the early centuries attach any stigma to it nor was there any inhibition in using it. A 7th century record refers to a lady called vināpōṭi as a sūle.

Dr. Shrinivas Ritti has put forward an interesting meaning to this term which is traced to the word 'sūl' meaning repeatedly. Since the dancer concerned was performing the dance repeatedly she came to be known as sūle. Many of these came to be attached themselves to the king or higher officials who provided their livelihood.

After about the 12th century when Virasaivism had its impact on society the temple as an institution lost its significance. Naturally, therefore, there was no place for such temple services in the temple which in greater numbers turned out to be Mathās. Naturally, those that were originally attached to the temples now took to prostitution. Since the halo of honour still presented itself, they came to be called themselves as the Basavis who, in the same way as the sūles did, dedicated themselves to one or two deities like the Ellamma. But temple worship having lost its significance these deities were essentially folk deities. The sūles themselves now came to be called as Basavis and the Basavi system thus, came into existence. The sūles were devotees of God

and served God. But for better and more comfortable living slowly they came to be attached to some individuals also .

Although the Basavi system practically resembled the system of sūles the Basavis now came to be better organised. They not only fulfilled to a small degree of the original concept, but, now being directly connected with the individuals in society, secured a more prominent position. Earlier they were not looked down, but now they carved out a place of honour and often times they had a benefactor who was economically quite well-to-do.

Aim & Scope:

In the present dissertation an attempt is made to study the system which has already been outlined above. Since the system is a far flung one, it is somewhat difficult to study the entire system all over the country, let alone abroad. Hence, the researcher has delimited the study to a very small region, namely, Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh. Apart from dealing with the theoretical aspects as well as antiquity of the system as it prevailed in India and other countries, efforts have been made to focus attention on the Basavi system in Andhra Pradesh in general and Kurnool district in particular.

This system is no more associated with the temples as it was in the past, but came to be institutionalised by itself. Therefore, it is tried to show how the socio-economic causes were responsible for the perpetuation of the system which is no more honourable but one which came to be held in contempt, as the system became a social institution devoid of religious background. It came to be degenerated itself to such an extent that both the Government of Andhra Pradesh and private bodies came forward to ameliorate the miserable conditions of these Basavis who have now become down-trodden. The researcher, hence, has to critically evaluate the impact of various welfare measures on the lives of the Basavis and offer suitable suggestions for the speedy and effective rehabilitation of the Basavis.

The source materials used by us for this dissertation are rich and varied. We have seen that the system is an age-old institution as it were and in India itself there are a number of literary and epigraphical sources. The literary sources give a varied picture of the institution and there had been a great deal of differences of opinion among the scholars with regard to the interpretation of the literary material. We have made use of archaeological materials like the relics that throw welcome light upon the subject in spite of differences in interpretation. Tamil literature specially

abounds in references to dēvadāsis although they are not termed so. It is inferred from the available material that dedication of girls to temples, to kings and chiefs was, in fact, a normal custom. We have also referred to works like Kālidāsā's Mēghadūta, Kautilyā's Arthasāstra, Chi-yu-ki of Huen Tsang etc., A good number of epigraphs of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh throwing light on this topic have been referred to in course of this dissertation. A good number of secondary sources in the form of published works have also been made use of. A schedule was administered to elicit information from the present members of the system and we interviewed about 250 dēvadāsis mostly in Adoni, Alur and Holeygunda areas of Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh. The data so gathered have been analysed. There is unanimity in their answers with regard to certain features while some others reacted in a different way. Documents in the form of welfare projects undertaken by the Government and other voluntary organisations have been consulted. Thus, all research instruments have been availed of in preparing this dissertation.

CHAPTER II

ORIGIN OF THE DĒVADĀSĪ SYSTEM

The dēvadāsis have had very important place in the history of mankind and dēvadāsi system was a popular institution in the history of early India. Yet the origin of this socio-religious institution is shrouded in darkness. Scholars have expressed different opinions with regard to the origin of this system. For instance, it is assigned to the age of the Tantric cult in the 8th century A.D., to the age of the emergence of the structural temples, to the age of the Purāṇās, and to the age of Kautilya.

According to Prof. Kunjan Pillai, the age of the spread of Tantricism in India must have contributed for the origin of the dēvadāsi system. Started first with the Pancha-makāra in the Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Tantric cult diffused to Brahmanism. This resulted in the composition of obscene literature, the birth of the institution of dēvadāsīs, the carving of mithuna sculpture in temples and the manifestation of sex influence in religious rituals in India. These raised their ugly heads only after the 8th century A.D., a period characterised by decadence in Indian culture.¹

1. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai : Annathe Keralam (Malayalam), PP : 154-60

On the contrary, M.Srinivasa Aiyangar, K.K.Pillay and H.D.Sankalia hold that the emergence of structural temples paved the way for the birth of dēvadāsi system in India. M.S.Aiyangar states that aesthetic arts started acquiring a religious colour from about the 7th century A.D., when dance and drama were encouraged to draw large number of devotees to the temples. Thus, hundreds of dancing girls or Gandharvis were attached to every important temple². Similarly, Prof. K.K.Pillai states that the system became common in South Indian temples only after the 7th century A.D. when "we hear of woman dancers called adigalmar, otherwise known as Mannikkattar and Kanikaiyar in the inscriptions of the 8th century A.D."³ But he is of the opinion that these "woman attendants and dancers must have arisen probably with the emergence of structural temples"⁴. On the otherhand, Prof. H.D.Sankalia holds that the system had its birth only after the emergence of structural temples. He contends that the temples of early days were inconspicuous little things, where dance could not be performed. He also states that the sabhāmaṇḍapa (later called raṅgamaṇḍapa), which made its gradual appearance in tune with the emergence of structural temples, was not more than 100 or 200 square ft. even by the

2. M.Srinivasa Aiyangar : Tamil studies, pp : 189-90

3. K.K.Pillai : A Social History of the Tamils, p. 378

4. K.K.Pillai : Studies in the History of India with Special Reference to Tamilnadu, PP : 321-22

8th century A.D. To quote him "since the maṇḍapa was originally non-existent, and later very small, possibly there was no dance before the deity, that there was no institution of the dēvadāsi".⁵

Prof. A.S.Altekar attributes the origin of the system to the Paurāṇic-Gupta age. Basing on several works such as Mēghadūta of Kālidāsa, Rājatarangini of Kalhana, Chi-yu-Ki of Hieun Tsang and Paurāṇic works like Bhāgavata-Purāna, Padma-Purāna and Matsya-Purāna, he concludes that the custom, however, had come into vogue by about the 3rd century A.D.⁶ On the otherhand, B.N. Sharma and R.N.Saletore attribute it to the age of Kautilya. The former states that "this custom is atleast as old as Kautilya"⁷ and the latter also writes that the dēvadāsīs were clearly mentioned in the literature of the 4th century B.C."⁸. Both of them refer to Kautilya's statement that women attached to the temples were studiously taught the arts of music and dance, and were employed in the Shutrasala (Weaving Department) when they became old.

5. A.S.Altekar : The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, pp : 182-83

6. For similar views see A.S.Altekar : The Rashtrakutas and their Times, pp: 295-96. B.S.Upadhyaya : Women in Rig Veda, p.204.

7. B.N.Sharma : Social and Cultural History of Northern India, p. 74.

8. N.Saletore : Sex Life under Indian Rulers, pp : 124-25

The above said views do not appear to be convincing for various reasons. Induchuden rejects the argument of Prof. Kunjan Pillai of the 8th century origin of the sculpture of maithuna style in India by citing the crude form of maithuna type of sculptural remains from the Indus Valley atleast some five thousand years ago. He also says that the sexual organs and sexual reproductive processes have been the themes of ritual songs even in Vedic times and cites a number of passages in support of his view.⁹ Furthermore, in the Sangam works there are frequent references to Pūjās and festivals, dance and music and processions accompanied by lamps. Tolkāppiyam¹⁰ reveals that Pūjās and festivals were conducted to entertain the Gods. Similarly, Paripāṭal informs that dance and music were performed with a great deal of zeal and enthusiasm in the Muruga temple at Madurai.¹¹ In addition, the Mēghadūta of Kālidāsa reveals that the Siva temple of Mahakala at Ujjain echoed with the sound of the ankle-bells of the dancing girls in the evening¹².

Though epigraphical evidences establish the fact of existence of dēvadāsi system after the 8th century A.D., they are not the only available sources to be relied upon. Literary,

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9. V.T.Induchulan : The Secret Chamber, p. 284
 10. Tolkāppiyam : Purattinai Iyal, 30.
 11. Paripāṭal : 14:5, 17:13-15.
 12. M.R.Kale (ed): The Mēghadūta of Kalidasa.

epigraphical and archaeological sources facilitate the reconstruction of cultural history of a country. Literary sources like Pattinappālai¹³ indicate that Karikala, an illustrious Chola King of the Sangam age, dedicated his captive women to sweep and smear the floor with cow-dung, light the perpetual lamp and spread flowers on the floor every evening. Similarly, Sambhandar's Tiruvorriyur Padikam¹⁴ testifies the tradition of dancing and singing by girls of tender age everyday. Further, temples of various sizes and nature constructed of mud and timber are referred to in Tamil works like Pattinppālai¹⁵.

The dēvadāsīs are referred to in one way or other in the works that came to light before Kautilya. The Rigveda, the earliest record of the Hindus, reports that women were employed to sing in praise of the God at the time of the squeezing out of the sōma juice.¹⁶ Similarly, it is widely held that the structure excavated at Mohenjodaro probably suggests the existence of a temple and the excavation of many female figures from the Indus valley suggests the age-old tradition of religious dancing. According to Prof. V.R.Ramachandra Dikshitar, the bronze image of the dancing girl unearthed from Mohenjodaro probably represents the dēvadāsīs of modern time.¹⁷ Moti Chandra also holds that the figure represents a sacred prostitute carrying out the duties within the precincts of the temple of some mother goddess¹⁸.

13. Pattinappālai : 246-49

14. Sambandar : Tevaram, 130:1

15. Pattinappālai, 246-49

16. Rig Veda : 1:156:2; 1:156:3 VII 100:5

17. V.R.Ramachandra Dikshitar : Pre-historic South India, p.121

18. Moti Chandra : The World of Courtesans, p.2

Thus, many of the views putforth by learned scholars are untenable as their opinions are based either on purānic or historic (literary) evidences unsupported by archaeological information. K. Sadasivan, hence, seems to be correct when he attributes this system to three thousand B.C. on the basis of archaeological findings of the temple structure, the statuette of the proto type of Śiva, Natarāja, the bronze image of the dancing girl and other dancing figures and the cult of Tantricism from the Indus Valley¹⁹:

Dēvadāsi System in Other Cultures:

The custom of dēvadāsi is not unique in Indian culture alone. There are several parallels in various other cultures. Terms like Hierodouloi of ancient Babylonia, the 'Concubines' of Zeus (Amman) of Egypt, the Lepodovroi of Corinth in Greece, the Kosio of Slave Coast of Africa, the Geishas of Japan, the a-nan of Combodia, the 'Vestal Virgins' of ancient Rome etc., undoubtedly support the prevalence of similar institutions in other parts of the world. According to Sir James Frazer²⁰ /z divine marriage or theogamy was aimed at intensifying the

19. K.Sadasivan : "Origin of the Devadasi system", South Indian History Congress, proceedings of the Third Annual Conference, pp : 139-145.

20. James Frazer. : The Goulden Bough, p: 140

fruitfulness of the earth, animals, and mankind. Hence, sacred nuptials were celebrated every year, the parts of divine bride and bridegroom being enacted either by their images or by living representatives. The cult of this divine wedlock, which provides the basis for the sanctified prostitution, was widespread among the nations of antiquity.

At Athens, the God of Vine, namely, Dionysus was annually married to the queen to ensure fertility of the vines and other fruit-bearing trees. However, it is not known whether a man or an image enacted the role of God.²¹ Similarly, in Sweeden, every year a life-size image of Frey, the God of fertility was taken round the country in a wagon accompanied by a beautiful girl who was designated as the God's wife. She also functioned as the priestess in the great temple at Upsala. The people assembled in huge numbers to meet and offer sacrifices to the image of God and his blooming young wife in anticipation of a fruitful year.²²

The men and women dedicated to temple service as consorts of god or goddess had to observe physical chastity in some cultures. The virgin priestesses were also highly respected among the Guanchces of the Canary Islands and the ancient

21. Ibid., p. 142

22. Ibid., p. 143

Persians, Greeks and Romans. The order of Vestal Virgins in Rome remained unmarried for thirty years and few retired after that period. Live burial was the penalty for breaking the vow of chastity. In Yucatan virgin priestesses tended the fire. The temple women of Mexico were punished for unchastity with death.²³ The Indians of a village in Peru wedded a beautiful girl, aged fourteen years to a stone, shaped like a human being, which they regarded as a God. The girl, therefore, remained a virgin and was sacrificed to the idol for the people. In Syria men sacrificed their virility by undergoing castration at the great festival of Astarate at Hieropolis. And, twice every year, a castrated man climbed two huge phalli which stood at the door of the temple where he was believed to have a conversation with Gods to bring about the prosperity and fertility to the land²⁴.

In some other cultures, the dedicated women as consorts of God had to abstain from any liaisons with ordinary mortals and could have only priestly or royal unions. At Thebes in Egypt, a women slept in the inner sanctuary of the temple of Amman as the consort of God and it was said that she did not have any dealings with any man. Egyptians believed that their

23. W.Crawley : Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol.III
ed. James Hastings

24. Quoted in Prabha Mahale : "Women in the Service of God",
South Asian Social Scientist, pp. 18-19.

monarchs were the offsprings of the God Amman, who in the disguise of the king had intercourse with the queen.²⁵ Thus, the cult of divine union, as said earlier, supplies the basis for sacred prostitution among many nations of the antiquity.

Sacred prostitution in Western Asia has been reported in some of the earliest records of Babylonia and has also occurred in Syria, Phoenicia, Arabia, Egypt, Greece and Rome. The existence of similar cults has also been traced in the far East, Central America and West Africa.²⁶ Mesoptemia was the first home of religious prostitution. The two evidences - the code of Hammurabi and the Epic of Gilgamesh prove the existence of sanctified harlotry in Babylonia wherein every temple had male and female Hierodouloi (priests) whose number varied with its size. Again the female Hierodouloi were of different grades. The Epic of Gilgamesh provides evidence with regard to the enforced temporary prostitution of every Babylonian woman.

The mother Goddess was called Altar or Athar in Syria, while at Hieropolis in Lebanon she was known as Atargatis. At Bablos in Phoenicia during the annual festival of mourning for Adonis, men got their heads shaved and women who denied to

25. James Frazer : op.cit., pp : 143-45

26. N.M.Penzer : "Sacred Prostitution", in The Ocean of Story, Henry Tawney Junor and N.M.Penzer (ed), pp. 268.

forego their hair had to hire their bodies to strangers for a day in the temple. The money, thus, earned was earmarked for the Goddess. A woman could purchase immunity from the sacrifice of her chastity if she sacrificed her hair.²⁷

Further, the pre-Muhammadan Arabs, too, worshipped the mother goddess known as Al-lat or Al-Uzza. Patristic references to her worship indicate that her worship was accompanied by the temporary practice of sacred prostitution. It is probable that their nomadic life must have prevented them from maintaining permanent members for the divine service.²⁸

Hebrew religion also sanctioned the practice of sacred prostitution of both the sexes. In Israel not only women and brides practised harlotry but the rulers and priests too offered their sacrifices along with practices smacking of sacred prostitution. In Egypt, the institution was associated with cults of Goddess Amman at Thebes where the wife of high priest had the title of 'Chief Concubine' while a queen or princess was called 'wife of the God'. A very beautiful virgin of the most distinguished lineage was consecrated to Amman. The former could have intercourse with anybody she liked for a month for

27. Ibid., p : 275.

28. George A. Barton : Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics
Vol. V. ed. James Hastings, pp. 674-75.

purifying her body and then she was normally wedded. This custom substantiates the prevalence of similar institutions in other semitic regions.²⁹

Religious prostitution in Greece survived till 2nd century A.D. In West Africa, the Ewe-speaking and the Tshi-speaking people had three types of female Kosio or women dedicated to the python-god, Danh-gbi. Though each had her own organisation, but they all lived together in a complex of houses. The novices had to undergo initiation for a period of three years during which they learnt chants and dances associated with the worship of Gods and offered themselves to the priests and inmates of the male seminaries. After the completion of training, they were entitled to become public prostitutes.³⁰

A number of theories have been put forth as to the cause for the origin of the institution of the dēvadāsi.

- 1) Dēvadāsi system is regarded as a substitute for human sacrifice, being an offering to the deity in order to appease him or to secure blessings for the country in question and its inhabitants.

29. Ibid, p. 675-76.

30. N.M.Penzer : op. cit., pp : 277-79

- 2) It originates from the custom of providing sexual hospitality for strangers.
- 3) It is a rite to ensure the fruitfulness and the multiplication of man and beast on the principle of homeopathic magic. In other words, it represents a fertility cult.
- 4) It is an expiation for individual marriage as a temporary recognition of pre-existing communal marriage.
- 5) It merely represents the licentious worship of a people, subservient to a degraded and vicious priesthood.
- 6) It is a part of the phallic worship which existed in India from early Dravidian times.³¹

Most of these explanations are quite insufficient to account for the whole institution of dēvadāsis, while others such as Nos. 4 and 5 have already been disproved. However, No. 3 supported by Frazer and many other scholars seems to be the most plausible, although it certainly does not account for everything. Although one cannot overlook the fact that the origin of two similar customs in different parts of the world may not be the same, a critical examination of the dēvadāsi system in various cultures reveals some universality underlying the specifically different characteristics.

31. Ibid., p. 267

CHAPTER III

ANTIQUITY OF THE BASAVI SYSTEM

Theogamy in India is known as dēvadāsi (dēvadāsa) custom. The custom is known by different nomenclatures in different parts of the country on the basis of sacred services they provide such as dancing, singing, assisting in the conduct of rituals and attending to secular duties at the temple such as cleaning, washing, serving in the temple.¹ According to Chidananda Murthy, these men and women are known as dāsarū and dāsigalū respectively.² The girls are chiefly meant for providing stage (raṅga) and bodily (aṅga) pleasures to the deity.

In Karnataka, dēvadāsis are known by different names such as 'Basavi', 'Muttu kattikondavalu', 'Dēvarasūle', 'Gejjepuje madisikondavalu', 'Nagasani', 'Kasabi' and so on. Broadly speaking, they are of two categories viz., attenders to the ritual work and performers of secular functions at the temples. Further, they both hail from ritually high and low castes.

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1. Milton Singer: When a Great Tradition Modernises: An Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilization, p : 169.
 2. M.Chidananda Murthy : Kannada Sasanagala Samskritika Adhyayana (450-1150), p : 181.

In central Karnataka, the term Basavi is quite popularly used for dēvadāsi. The Kannada term Basavi is the feminine gender of Basava or Nandi - the bull of Siva and literally means a female breeding bull. It is a common practice among the Hindus to dedicate a bull for public use on the death of a member of the family. These are breeding bulls of the village flock. Likewise, girls are dedicated to deities and are called Basavis.

The origin of the Basavi system is traced to the 12th century, when Virasaivism was in its glory in the present Karnataka State. It is believed that this system took its origin among the Okkaliga and Komati castes³. It gradually spread to Vaishnavism⁴. The dedication was restricted to the class of male gods. This system is said to have been prohibited by Aliya Ramaraju, the king of Vijayanagara in the sixteenth century⁵. But, it still survives in a modified form. It must have later descended to the 'lower castes' who started dedicating children, mostly girls, to the predominantly female folk deities. Still later, some of the higher castes adopted this system and started dedicating children to some popular deities of Hinduism.

3. C.P.Brown : Brownya Nighantuvu (Telugu), P: 607.

4. Abbe J.A.Dubois : Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies p. 133

5. Konduru Veeraraghavācharyulu : Mohanangi (Telugu), p:186

Since 12th century, the term Basavi occurs in Telugu and Kannada literature. In the literature of anthropological interest, it is probably first mentioned by Dubois⁶ according to whom, "the priestesses (Basavis) are.....women specially set apart, under the name of the 'wives of the goddess' for the service of one or the other of these deities'. He distinguished between Linga-Basavis (followers of Siva) and the Garuda-Basavis (followers of Vishnu). Thurston also has referred to this system⁷. Iyer distinguishes Basavis from dēvadāsis and attributes prostitution to the former⁸.

Types of Basavis:

There are many types of Basavis who can be classified into (1) Gudi-basavi, (2) Jati-basavi, (3) Balagada-basavi, (4) Ura-basavi, (5) Garudagambada-basavi, (6) Nandikola-basavi and so on⁹. Each of them has her own status and role to play. The arena of their movement is also clearly demarcated. A detailed account of each category of Basavis is given below.

6. Abbe J.A.Dubois : op.cit., p : 133

7. E.Thurston; Castes and Tribes of Southern India, pp: 133-37.

8. L.A.K.Iyer, "Devadasis in South India : Their Traditional Origin and Development", Man in India, pp: 47-52.

9. K.G.Gurumurthy: Indian Peasantry, p:70.

I Gudi Basavi:

"Gudi-Basavi" is also known in some villages as 'Ura-basavi' and is regarded as the consort of the principal deity of the village (Uradevaru). She hails from the customarily designated family in the village, which by tradition dedicated a girl as a sūle. The rules, which govern her dedication, are rigid. She has to be dedicated before menarche and has to observe chastity throughout her office. At the time of her retirement, say at the age of thirty or so, she should nominate her successor, preferably her brother's daughter or her own younger sister to her position. Owing to this, as soon as a daughter is born to one of her brothers, she negotiates with him and, on consent, the child is symbolically designated, and a suitable name is also given to her. Such a proposal is rarely rejected, as it has financial and socio-religious advantages to the family. The girl, who is designated to be a dēvadāsi, is not permitted to indulge freely with the youth of the caste or community, and is at liberty to move about and earn for family. At an appropriate age she is dedicated to the deity by performing elaborate rites which her village, caste and clan folk attend. The village elders and the senior dēvadāsi see that the newly

initiated Basavi remains a virgin during her office. The breach of the rule is punishable by imposing excommunication and heavy fines both on man and the girl. The expenditure over her maintenance is to be borne by the entire village. After retirement, she is allowed to remain as a concubine of any man.

II Jati Basavi:

This category of Basavis is dedicated by a caste (Jāti) to the caste deity. Her selection and maintenance are the affairs of that particular caste. However, it is not clear whether she is restricted to have carnal relations with her caste men alone or outgroup too. Nowadays, the youth of lower castes oppose their women having ritual sexual relations with the upper caste people, as they view it as one of the measures of challenging the dominance of the latter. Unlike the Ura-basavi, the Jati-basavi has only a few privileges and obligations. She can live with any man of her choice. Her position is succeeded to by younger girls of the clan. They are required to present themselves in all rites and rituals conducted at the temple and individual familial levels, mostly to assist temple Basavis and

the priest. As these women are wedded to an immortal god, they never become widows and enjoy the status of akhaṇḍa saubhāgyavati. Traditionally, they are supposed to remain virgins, but nowadays, this restriction is often violated, since a single caste by itself cannot afford to maintain a Basavi.

III Balagada Basavi:

This type of dedication is unique in the sense that a couple, who has no male children, employs one of its daughters to propagate their progeny by dedicating her to their favourite deity as a Basavi and claims her children as members of the family. Since the girl is not married outside the clan, her children naturally belong to the clan of her father. But, she is allowed to have sexual relations with anybody of her own kin group only.

Apart from these Basavis, there are other types of Basavis such as Lingada Basavi, Garudgambada Basavi, Divatige basavi¹⁰, Yade-basavi, Hennu-basavi, Bala-basavi, Batla-basavi

10. S.Shettar : "Maduve Ondu Sankoleyalla", Sudha (Kannada Weekly), p.30.

and so on¹¹. The Lingada-basavis are the women in the service of Lord Siva and bear the mark of Lingam (Phallus) tattooed on their thighs. On the other hand, Garuda-basavis ^{to} are the women dedicated/Vishnu and bear the image of the bird eagle, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu according to Hindu mythology. The emblem is tattooed on their body, usually on their right breast as an indicator of their status. The Divatige-basavi carries the sacred lamp (divatige) of the deity when the deity is taken in procession, and gets customary payments for this service from the devotees. Yade basavi is one who carries the sacred food (yade) offered to the deity and later claims it for herself, her family and her clan. For ritual purposes, the dedication of girls from lower castes to a deity belonging to upper castes was not allowed. Hence, the former castes dedicated their girls to sacred objects in the shrine such as sacred feet marks (pada), flag post (kamba), entrance, pillars etc¹².

Another type of Basavi called as the Hennu-basavi was also in existence in the erstwhile State of Mysore. The word Hennu means female. She was called so when the dedication was neither to Lord Vishnu nor to Lord Siva.

11. B.R.Patil : "The Dēvadāsis", The Indian Journal of Social Work.

12. K.C.Tarachand : Women in Sacred Prostitution : A study of Devadasi custom in Karnataka, p.30.

Instead she was dedicated to a Goddess or a female deity of the village.

In the erstwhile Bombay Karnataka region comprising the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar and North Kanara, the Basavis were grouped into Bala-basavis and Batla-basavis. The former were recruited from the Mahar caste - untouchables among the Virasaivas or the Lingayats. The word 'Bala' means young, or maiden. Hence, they were perhaps supposed to be virgin and observe chastity throughout their life. But like any other form of dēvadāsis in India, this form also lost its original meaning, and significance in course of time, especially in the medeival times and the women had been prostitutes. However, these women were reputed for their sooth-saying on matters such as rain, weather, crop etc., in which the rural folk are interested. On the first day of the Hindu calendar - the Yugadi - they used to worship the musical instrument called tamburi, which they used to carry with them wherever they went. They used to go from house to house foresaying events and collecting gifts while playing on the tamburi. On other occasions also they practiced the same. The Bala-basavis are still found in some villages of North Karnataka, but they do not prostitute.

And, even today, some of them collect the yearly rewards and grants not only from the temple to which they were dedicated but also from the community.

The Batla-basavis were found more commonly than the Bala-basavis. The adjective Batla means a concave metal vessel which was carried by these Basavis always. This vessel is the distinguishing symbol of this Basavi as the tamburi is of the Bala-basavi. The vessel was given to her at the time of her dedication by the Virasaiva community, especially by the merchant class among them. The Batla-basavi was free to thrust the vessel into the heap of any food grains in anybody's shop in the market and get a handful of that grain. Thus, she collected her livelihood and she could collect it as long as she possessed the vessel. The brothers of a Basavi had no claim over her perquisites which she got from the Virasaiva community. Instead, they were entitled to only one fourth of the movable property of her family, the rest being owned by the Basavi herself.

These Basavis were dedicated to serve exclusively the Virasaivas and to live under their care. The rules of conduct of the Virasaivas lay down that the Basavis should not

have sexual relations with a Bhavi, a non-Lingayat. When a Basavi was found to have sexual relations with a Bhavi, she was deprived of her vessel and was prevented from collecting her livelihood from the Virasaivas. It also meant the loss of care and protection from the Virasaiva community and becoming a common prostitute to sell her charms to anybody for monetary considerations. But, the spiritual loss was still greater. Becoming a prostitute to Bhavis meant the definite loss of heaven, for, if a Basavi served the Virasaivas faithfully, it was believed that she would attain salvation. The philosophy of Virasaivas has been, "work is worship". Therefore, sincere and devoted pursuit of one's own profession would definitely earn for him the heaven and the salvation. The profession of a Basavi was prostitution. Hence, she was expected to be faithful to the Virasaivas as a prostitute and help herself to attain the heavenly abode. This rule forms the eleventh of the sixty four rules of conduct of the Virasaivas that were laid down during the 12th century. Thus, the profession of Basavis in Karnataka was socially and religiously recognised as a means to attain salvation.

As said earlier, the institution of Basavi in Karnataka refers to an age-old practice of dedication for life of young

girls to village gods and goddesses, objects of worship whereby the consecrated women are incapable of contracting a lawful marriage. Basavis usually live on concubinage, as sexual acts sanctioned by wedlock are especially repugnant ones in the service of the deity. Among the lower Sudra castes of Karnataka like Madiga, Holeya, Beda, Kuruba, Golla, Dombar, Voddas etc., when there is no male heir in the family it is customary to dedicate a daughter as Basavi to perpetuate the patrilineal line. It is also common for some parents of the above said castes to dedicate their daughters in pursuance of some vow taken at the time of family distress, or serious illness to obtain relief or cure for themselves or their children. At times, parents desiring male issues of their own, promise a daughter to the deity. Those who are unable to spare money required for the daughter's betrothal and marriage too take help of the custom.

A dedicated girl permanently stays in her father's house and practises sexual relations with a person of equal or higher caste. The Basavis do not usually prostitute themselves promiscuously on hire. A Basavi often lives in concubinage with one man who allows her a fixed weekly or monthly sum for her maintenance. She is not, on this account, despised

in the society. No stigma attaches to the Basavis or their children and they are treated on terms of equality by other members of their caste. The children of a Basavi are accepted as legitimate and in fact, Basavis themselves are outwardly indistinguishable from married women of their own community. Furthermore, a Basavi is believed to be immune from widowhood. She is the most welcome guest at weddings and is considered a bearer of good luck. At weddings people get a string of the tāli prepared by her and she threads on it beads from her own necklance.

Basavis differ from the dēvadāsis or dancing girls dedicated to temples in the sense that they are not dancing girls and their duties in the temples are confined to the shrine of their dedication and are nominal. They do not prostitute themselves promiscuously. However, the two terms are often used synonymously.

The rite of dedication includes the wedding of the girl to the idol of any presiding village God or Goddess such as Hanumanta, Virabhadra, Yellamma, Dyamavva etc., or to some inanimate object like a dagger, a sword or a drum and bells personifying the bridegroom. The initiation rites

correspond to the Hindu marriage ceremony. The ceremony of dedication differs greatly in different temples. If the girl is initiated in a Vaishnava temple, she is usually branded with a sankha and chakra, emblems of Vishnu, on both the shoulders and over the right breast. The mark over the breast is never done if the girl is of doubtful virginity. If initiated at the temple of Yellamma at Saundatti the ceremony is different and the girl is not branded, but a string with white and red beads or the tāli with black beads symbolising marriage is tied round her neck by a priest, caste member or her own mother's brother. As is often the custom, girls are dedicated as Basavis by promise made even prior to their birth and are dedicated any time from birth to puberty.

In case a girl is dedicated before she attains menarche then a second ceremony is performed at the time of her attainment of puberty. The hymen ceremony performed to mark the girl's puberty corresponds with garbhadāna ceremony or marriage. A feast is given to the caste men and after three days, the girl is free to mate with any man who is not lower than her own caste. The man who receives her favours has generally to pay her father the expenditure incurred for her dedication as a Basavi.

The institution of Basavi endows masculine privileges to the girls, as the parents have a definite purpose of enhancing the status of the patrilineal family and perpetuating it. The structural norms in patrilineal family set up expect the son to continue the family line. The son also performs the rites on the death of his parents. He is obliged to look after the parents in their old-age and his earnings can rightfully be shared by the parents. Further, the son is entitled to inherit the parent's property.

In the specific circumstances wherein the only issue in the patrilineal family is a daughter, the family could become extinct if she marries. Hence, the provision of the institution of Basavi entitles the parents to control and utilize her sexuality for their own maintenance and use her reproductive power to continue the patrilineal family line. Hence, contrary to all Hindu Law, the Basavi inherits the family property as though she were a son. She performs the obsequies of the parents in the place of the son, thus enabling the parents to die in peace and practically in all respects she takes the place of a son. She removes the parental family's hardship by the earnings derived from her concubinage or prostitution; she looks after the parents in their old age. If she has a son he takes her name and inherits

her property and perpetuates her father's family. If she too has only a daughter then, again, that daughter is dedicated as a Basavi. For purposes of marriage, issues of a Basavi are as eligible as those of the women normally married.

The institution of Basavi, thus, proves to be a pointer to the family strategy whereby a family with its patrilineal ideology uses its women to perpetuate itself or under economic compulsions depends on earnings derived by them or gains punya (merit) by dedicating them to deities.

The institution of Basavi also seems to be a by-product of the cultural strategy adopted by the society. The cultural values do not exist in vacuum and they have an economic base too. The Basavis, who mostly come from lower depressed castes, are farm labourers and their patrons belong to higher castes or economically better off classes who control the vital sources of means of production such as land, money etc., in the village. It is also common for a caste Hindu, who likes a good-looking girl, compel her parents to dedicate her as a Basavi, bears the expenditure of her dedication and maintains a permanent liaison with the girl. He also utilizes

her as a source of labour in his farm. Furthermore, the extra-marital relations with the Basavis are viewed as status symbols. On the other hand, for the lower caste families this custom serves as a means of establishing links and enhancing their own status with the upper castes. A daughter of untouchable caste through this institution becomes acceptable to other castes. The caste rules stipulate the Basavis to mate with men of higher castes and forbid them to consort with lower castes. Though the sex-partners of the Basavis are not their husbands they do influence the status of a Basavi and her family vis-a-vis others in the community and the custom points to the use of women as instruments of social mobility by their own families¹².

The age old beliefs, legends and myths play a pivotal role in perpetuating the system. When a family suffers from a natural calamity or a child belonging to a poor family of a low caste, suffers from a kind of skin disease called Khandak or develops a jata (clotted pad of hair) it is attributed to the wrath of goddess and a fear of retribution is instilled if the deity is not appeased through the initiation of a girl into Basavihood.

13. Prabha Mahale: "Basaris of Karnatak - The Daughters Enodowed with Masculine Privileges". The Eastern Anthropologist, pp:128-29.

Another important reason for dedication in recent years in the drought prone border districts of Karnataka and Maharashtra is perpetual poverty and its consequent bye-product, namely, the motive of earning money by prostitution of oneself or a relative. In many cases poor families are compelled to dedicate their girls to practise commercial prostitution under the garb of religious sanction. The custom is often used to lure poverty-stricken Scheduled Caste women to prostitution who are sold for a price by their parents and who ultimately find their way to flesh trade in major cities like Bombay¹³. In fact, an in-depth study on prostitution made by Puneekar and Kamala Rao¹⁴ revealed that one-third of the 425 prostitutes of Bombay were dēvadāsis and more than half of them were from North Karnataka. Moreover, this has been substantiated by the study team of the Joint Women's Programme Staff Team also¹⁵.

Earlier it was not a matter of course for the Basavis to prostitute themselves for payment. But the engulfing of

13. *ibid*, p: 129

14. S.D.Puneekar & Kamala Rao A Study of Prostitutes in Bombay.

15. Joint Women's Programme Staff Team: Dēvadāsi System in North Karnataka.

commercial prostitution has facilitated the Basavis to become prostitutes providing sexual intercourse for men not necessarily of their own or upper castes. Consequently, their status in the society is adversely affected and they do not enjoy the same high social esteem that they once had in the closed circle of a village. In fact, their offsprings also face the problem of boycott in the marriage market of their own community, as they are faced with a crisis of identity.

Rehabilitation Measures: Sporadic attempts have been made for the eradication of this social evil through legislative measures. The enlightened rulers of Mysore prevented this system as early as in 1892 by despoising the employment of professional women for dancing on the occasion of car festival of Sri Bhoga Nandisvara at Nandi. In 1899, dancing of girls at Srikantheshvara temple, Nanjangud was stopped, but those dēvadāsis were allowed to draw their salaries till their death. The practice of dēvadāsi system was made punishable under the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Act, 1927. in Mysore.

The Indian Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code contain provisions bearing on prostitution and immoral

traffic. Long before the passing of the Supression of Immoral Traffic (in Women and Girls) Act passed in 1956, a few States had passed special Acts. There was the Bombay Dēvadāsi (Abolition) Act, 1934 and Madras Dēvadāsi (Prevention of Dedication) Act, 1947, After the reorganisation of the States, a common act applicable to all areas of Karnataka was enacted under the Karnataka Dēvadāsis (Prevention of Dedication) Act 1981. Accordingly, practising and encouraging this system were considered as cognizable offences punishable by a minimum of two years of imprisonment and levy of a fine ranging from Rs.2000 to Rs. 5000. Encouraging is considered a more serious offence than practising. For every three years the Census of dēvadāsis is conducted by the Government. According to 1984 Survey, the State had in all 8870 Dēvadāsis, the largest number being in Belgaum district (3266), followed by Dharwad (1728), Bellary (1509), Bijapur (1213), Raichur (615), Galburga (509), Bidar (30).

A certified school has been opened at Saundatti for the children of dēvadāsis between the age group of 5-15. A State Home is built at Athani for devadasis between the age group of 18-35. Training centres have been opened at

Katkal, Yadawad and Kaujalgi (all in Belgaum district) where training in the preparation of candles, agarbatti, soap, gardening, knitting, tailoring etc., is given, in addition to imparting of adult education. They are paid a stipend. Recently, the dēvadāsis of Yadawad and Kaujalgi together have organised their own multipurpose Socceity to stand on their own legs with self respect.

To encourage the marriage of dēvadāsis an incentive award of Rs.3000/- is also given for those men who come forward willingly. So far, about 206 marriages have been arranged. During 1987-88 Government had reserved Rs.2.50 lakhs anticipating the marriage of 108 dēvadāsis. The law declares that the marriage of dēvadāsi is valid and the children born to her out of such marriage are legitimate. Pressure is also brought by legislators on the Government to increase the marriage incentive amount and also to extend monthly pension as in the case of widows, though dēvadāsis are glorified as nitya sumangalis.

Special police cells have been established at Belgaum and Bidar to prevent the migration of these women to the brothels of Bombay. According to one Press report, among the prostitutes of Pune, Bombay and Delhi, the percentage

of devadasis who have accepted prostitution is reported as 50%, 20% and 10% respectively. It is also reported that every year about 5000 girls are dedicated to dēvadāsi practices. There is no vigorous implementation of the legal provisions protecting the dignity of women. Thus, despite official claims to the contrary, the custom continues undeterred.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN NOMANCLATURES

India is well known for her cultural diversity with an underlying unity. This peculiar characteristic feature of the country holds good also in the case of the institution of dēvadāsis. As stated earlier, the institution has been prevalent in the nook and corner of the country, but is known differently in different regions exhibiting certain unique as well as common features. For instance, the dēvadāsis were known as Bhavins or Bhavinis - beautiful, wanton women - in Goa and Western India; as Muralis, Joginis and Aradhinis, etc., in Maharashtra; as Bhagtani or Bhagtan - wife of Bhagat or holy man - in Marwar; as Basavis in Karnataka and Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh; as Devaradiyar - slaves of the gods - in Tamilnadu; and as Kudikkar - those who belong to the house - in Travancore region. How-

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ever, only a few variants of the dēvadāsi institutions are described below, while giving more importance to Basavis and other institutions in Karnataka and Maharashtra.

The Bhavinis:

The Bhavinis are also called as Devli - an attendant of an idol or as naikin - mistress, procuress. Heredity is the cardinal principal for the women to become Bhavinis. Interestingly enough, these women come from the households of the chiefs of the communities in which the system had been in existence. Another important feature of this institution is that a Bhavini is free to select two or three among her daughters to succeed her. These women differ from the common prostitute only with respect to their dedication to a temple¹⁶.

These women are found in Western India, especially in Konkan and Goa regions. Some of them are presented to the gods in infancy by their parents as the Muralis are. Their business is to attend the temple lamps, and keep them trimmed; to sweep and smear the floor; to turn the chauri over the idol; serve the hunka to the congregation, and to serve the visitors of the temple. They always trim the lamps with their fingers, and not with small sticks as other Hindus do.

16. W.Crooke: "Prostitution", in, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, p: 407.

The trimming of the lamp with the fingers by any other than a Bhavin is supposed to bring poverty; and this is particularly observed in all Hindu houses¹⁷.

The Bhagtanis:

The Bhagatan or Bhagtani is only an ironical title indicating that the woman is the wife of a holy man - god. The uniqueness of this institution is that before entering the temple service the girl has to wed a sādhu or (portrait of) lord Ganesha, as it is regarded a sin to allow the maiden girls to take up the infamous employment before solemnising the marriage ceremony. A sādhu is expected to forego every attachment with the bride on nominal payment of a rupee and a half as a token of his sacrifice. When no sādhu is available the girl is wedded to the portrait of Lord Ganesha, the God of enterprise¹⁸.

The Jogatis:

In north-western Karnataka and also in Southern Maha-

17. Fuller Marcus. B : The Wrongs of Indian Womenhood, pp:123-24.

18. W.Crook : op. cit., p: 407-8

rastra, there have been, apart from the institution of Basavi, three more institutions that are similar to, as well as different from, the institution of dēvadāsis. They are: (1) the institution of Jogatis, (2) Patradavaru and (3) the Veshis; of these, the first one is the most important and very popular institution from the view point of the common man and an anthropologist as well.

Etymologically speaking, the term jogati is a corrupt form of the word jogiti which is derived from the word jogini the feminine gender of the word jogi. Jogi itself is a corrupt form of the Sanskrit word Yōgi, meaning a sage. A yōgi is a person who has attained enlightenment or is in the pursuit of knowledge and salvation after having renounced all the mundane pleasures. But, for the lay man, a sage is a person who is in the pursuit of mōksha. A number of paths have been adopted by the common man to pursue the god, including serving him in different capacities. Hence, the term jogati necessarily means a person who has renounced the worldly pleasures and has devoted the rest of his/her life to the service of goddess Renuka. But it is difficult to say that the jogatis of the present day have renounced the worldly pleasures and devoted their life to the service of Renuka, for, most of them

become jogatis to pursue their personal ends. Moreover, none of them renounce the worldly pleasures; instead, they continue to enjoy them in the same manner after becoming jogatis, and some of them enjoy wordly pleasures with greater freedom¹⁹.

Types of Jagatis:

Broadly speaking, there are two types of Jogatis;
(1) Mangalarati Jogatis, and (2) Muttukattida Jogatis. while the former type is only one in number, the latter type of jogatis are innumerable. The Mangalarati Jogati is necessarily a dēvadāsi and is attached to the main temple of Renuka near Saundatti; no other temple of Renuka in the surrounding village is attached with Mangalarati Jogati. On the other hand, Muttukattida Jogatis cannot be referred to as dēvadāsis and are not attached either to the main temple of Renuka or the temples in the surrounding villages. Moreover, both types of jogatis undergo different dedication/initiation ceremonies. Mangalarati jogati is dedicated to the goddess for rendering certain services after she is brought from her parents by the temple priests whereas the latter type of jogatis undergo initiation ceremony called Muttukattuvadu, either on their own or at the instance of their parents.

19. B.R.Patil: "The Jogatis", Manu in India, p:31.

Furthermore, the Mangalarati Jogati is necessarily a maiden girl at the time of dedication, while only a few of the second type of jogatis are maidens.

Mangalarati Jogati:

The term Mangalarati means the sacred waving lamp. It is the bounden duty of this jogati to clean, to pour the oil, and to carry the lamp while the idol of Renuka/yellamma is taken in procession. She is expected to walk by the side of the palanquin in which the idol is placed. She provides neither music nor sings and dances like a dēvadāsi to provide ranga-bhōga (stage pleasure) to the goddess. In addition, she discharges her duties only on specified days like Tuesday, Friday, and the full moon day which are almost the festive occasions at the main temple. However, on important festive occasions she renders her services on all the days throughout the festival. Unlike a dēvadāsi, the Mangalarati Jogati does not render any kind of service to the goddess for a period of three months during which the goddess is supposed to be a widow.

As said earlier, Mangalarati Jogati is bought by the temple priests for rendering the services to goddess Renuka.

In fact, she lives in the colony of the temple priests who have their residential houses in a nearby village which mainly consists of the households of the Renuka temple priests. She leads her life as a prostitute of the temple priests. However, she may offer her sexual favours to anybody.

The Mangalarati Jogati continues her profession till she dies. It is said that, in the past, she was required to remain a virgin and chaste. She was to be dismissed from her position by the temple priests if she indulged in sexual relations and another girl was bought to replace her. It is further told that such dismissals were frequent, more than one a year. It may, therefore, be concluded that the institution of Mangalarati Jogati has also degenerated like the institution of dēvadāsi and the responsibility for it lies with the temple priests, as in the case of the other institutions.

Unlike the daughters of a dēvadāsi none of the daughters born to the Mangalarati Jogati was eligible to succeed her mother. All the children born out of the promiscuous life of the Mangalarati Jogati, instead, were allowed to marry. They are socially above the illegitimate offsprings, the

offsprings of a widow born to her out of her promiscuous life, the offsprings of a divorcee and the deserted. However, the matrimonial relations with these offsprings are sought by the lower castes. All the sons and daughters of the present Jogati are married.

Since the Mangalarati Jogati does not hold her position hereditarily and, at least in the past, she was being frequently replaced by a new one, she has not received any landed property out of the temple endowments. Instead, she is provided with maintenance through annual grants in kind by the temple priests. On different socio-religious occasions she gets priority treatment by way of gifts from all the families of the temple priests. She collects good amount of gifts from the pilgrims while carrying the sacred lamp and the devotees of Renuka who assemble on every festive occasion in large numbers. In addition, her paramours give various kinds of gifts. Thus, the Mangalarati Jogati earns a fortune for herself and for her children, through several means. It is said that the present Jogati has property in the form of buildings and lands - all bought out of the gifts so collected.

Muttukattida Jogatis: Muttu means pearls and Kattida means tied. But in actual practice only stone beads are used for the purpose. The word Muttu Kattida denotes an initiation ceremony that must be undergone by a person of either sex to become a Jogati other than Mangalarati Jogati. This ceremony is not held at the shrine of Renuka, but is held in one of the quarters of the temple priest around the shrine near Saundatti.

The initiation ceremony commences with a bath in the holy waters of three ponds that represent the three holy rivers. After the bath the person wears new clothes and is taken to the quarters of one of the temple priests in a procession accompanied by his/her relatives, one or two senior Jogatis from the person's native place, and the musicians (who usually hail from the same place). The prospective Jogati carries a nominal gift in kind (food articles) to the priest. He or she also carries a new basket bowl containing an idol plate of Parasurama (which must always be in the bowl). In the priest's quarter, Renuka and Parasurama are worshipped, and the priest garlands the person after the senior Jogatis have tied the stringed beads around the person's neck. Then the priest

addresses the Jogati and advises him/her on various 'Dos' and 'Don'ts'. A Jogati is required to share whatever he/she has with the hungry/needy. If nothing is available to share, he/she has to direct the person to a house where the alms would be available. The Jogati has to observe the minimum rules of purity and pollution and has to accept the priest as his/her master and to be faithful to his and his descendants. Then the new Jogati is taken by the senior Jogatis and the village priest to five houses for collecting alms.

After returning to the native place the newly initiated Jogati is required to go to the colony of the untouchables for two purposes. Firstly, to get the newly acquired things purified in the waters stored in the tanning pit, and secondly, to worship Matangi and offer her a due share in the alms collected on the first five 'days'. On these five 'days' the newly initiated Jogati is also supposed to feed the poor. After the first five 'days', she is free to visit Matangi's abode. But the Jogati must collect alms from at least five households and share the food cooked from it with the hungry if such a person comes to his/her house. In addition, a Jogati must pay a visit to the main temple of Renuka at least twice a year - once in December

and once in late March or early April - to observe the formalities of becoming a widow and getting back the status of a married woman²⁰.

In some cases, the initiation ceremony is put off if the person undergoing the ceremony has taken a vow to wear a particular kind of dress before becoming a Jogati. There are three types of dress (1) Birth suit, (2) Neem leaves' wear, and (3) Cloth wear, arranged in the descending order of the rigour with which the vow is taken by the devotees. Birth suit is worn only at two places, namely, Jogula Bhavi and the main temple of Renuka. However, a few persons walk the distance of three kilometres between the two places in birth suit, which means an extremely rigorous vow. In such cases, Jogula Bhavi is the starting point of the ceremony of wearing the 'dress' and the main temple is the destination where the 'dress' is removed and the routine dress is worn. If the 'dress' to be worn is of the third type, it may be worn even from one's house or after taking bath in river Malaprabha while crossing it at Munoli, or from the Jogula Bhavi, or lastly, at the main temple itself. If the 'dress' is not worn at the main temple or at the Jogula

20. Ibid,, p:35.

Bhavi the person has to walk down the distance on foot with a view to preventing themselves from being polluted.

The person supposed to wear the 'dress' takes bath in the holy waters, wears the 'dress' according to the oath taken and goes to the temple accompanied by the relatives and the musicians. If it is neem leaves' wear, the neem leaves are thickly tied to a string and the same is tied to the waistline of the person. If the wearer is a woman, a second string is tied to cover her tops. If it is cloth wear, the person wears the new unstitched cloth. Some women wear white cloth or dhotis instead of sarees. Whatever may be the 'dress' the person undergoing the ceremony is required to hold neem leaves in his/her mouth, in the folded hands and some leaves are kept on the head. And the relatives accompanying him/her sprinkle holy water to the face by dipping a bunch of neem leaves in the water. Upon reaching the temple the person takes a circumambulation around the temple, offers a brief worship to the Goddess and the Gods, and changes the dress with the help of the relatives. The person will wear the dress in normal fashion if the 'dress' is the cloth wear; otherwise, a new dress will be given to her/him to wear

in the normal fashion. The 'dress' ceremony is completed quite before the dawn if it is the birth suit, otherwise it is conducted after the dawn.

After the 'dress' ceremony is over, once again the person has to take bath in the holy waters of the three ponds and wear another set of new clothes to undergo the initiation ceremony to become a Jogati, for the two ceremonies are different and cannot be combined.

Sub-types of Muttukattida Jogatis: Muttakattida Jogatis are of three types, though all of them undergo the same initiation ceremony. Basing on the type of beads tied to their necks, they can be sub-classified as (1) Garati Muttu - the beads for a devout wife who would become a Jogati, (2) Sule Muttu - the beads for woman who would become a prostitute, and (3) Jogati Muttu - common beads. The beads are of two colours - white and red. The first type of beads consists of five white beads, the second type, the red beads, while the last type comprises both coloured beads. Some rich persons who become Jogatis prepare the necklace beads mixing beaten, circular gold leaves embossed with the figures of various goddesses and as a tali - sacred necklace of a married woman.

The woman who wears the Garati muttu is not deprived of the marital and domestic relations and privileges after she becomes a Jogati. At any time during the married life a woman may become a Jogati. There are no restrictions of caste, colour, creed or community or the socio-economic position to obtain the Garati Muttu and become a Jogati. Jogatis of this type are found among all sections of the Hindu population, including the Brahmin. However, majority of them are from the lower castes and poor families. The wives of the 'village priests' (of Renuka), who compulsorily become Jogatis in order to assist their men in worshipping Renuka, also obtain the Garati Muttu.

Now a days, Sule means prostitute. Hence, the Sule Muttu is meant only for those who are desirous of becoming prostitutes or whose parents want them to become harlots. These are necessarily the unmarried young girls, and initiation ceremony also takes place prior to the menarche. The practice of seeking Sule muttu is very common among the low caste people and the poor. However, they have been giving up the practice since Independence. It is also said that the number of persons seeking Sule Muttu is very small compared to those seeking the other types of beads.

The last category of beads is given to men*, eunuchs, widows, the superannuated prostitutes etc. After becoming Jogatis these persons devote the rest of their life to the service of the goddess, but many of them become economically unproductive despite their being able-bodied. Of the Jogatis of this type, only the male Jogatis learn the art of dancing, balancing a copper pot on their head to which the idol plate of Renuka is tied. In course of time they become adepts in the art. Some male Jogatis, and others too, learn to play the light musical instruments which are called in the regional language as Shruti, Tala and Jagate.

Dressing Pattern of Jogatis: The Jogatis after undergoing the 'dress' ceremony may change their usual dress pattern. Some women switch over to white clothes instead of coloured sarees, some change over to the male's dress and start putting on dhoti, shirt, turban etc. The two changed over patterns are worn by some on Tuesday and Fridays, while others make it a regular dress. However, it may be added here that those who make it a regular dress, wear the white cloth in the manner a saree is worn.

* men initiated into the Jogatihood are called Jogappas.

On the other hand, all the eunuchs who accept Jogathihood compulsorily switch over to the female's dress. They start wearing saree, bodice, grow hair and regularly dress as the women do; they also wear bangles, nose ring, the thali, anklets and above all shave their beards every day. Thus, it would be somewhat difficult to distinguish them from women, especially from a distance. They have, therefore, an advantage of mixing freely with, especially, the lewd women and the prostitute - Jogatis.

The rural folk believe that goddess Renuka brings about a change of sex-male into female and vice-versa. But in fact, it is a case of simple transvestitism. Furthermore, a few Jogatis grow Jata-knotted hair that are not amenable to combing. A jogati having such hair is considered to be very pious.

With regard to the prostitute - Jogatis there is no transvestitism, for change of dress adversely affects their profession. Many of them do not strictly follow the rules of conduct of Jogatis so long as they are prosperous prostitutes.

Reasons for the Acceptance of Jogatihood:

Several reasons are put forth for the acceptance of Jogatihood. In case of the Jogatis who seek Sūle Muttu the reasons are quite obvious. Either they themselves or their parents are interested in prostitution because of its material benefits. Hence, most of the poor, the untouchables, the down-trodden and the uneducated practice the Jogatihood ultimately to become prostitutes. A woman who is already in the profession or has retired as a prostitute becomes a Jogati in order to have some kind of recognition from society, for on important occasions the Jogatis are respected and are allowed to mix with others and are also served feast before anybody is served irrespective of their origin or caste. Usually every retired prostitute in the Northern part of Karnataka becomes a Jogati; and there is a folk saying to that effect (Sule Muppagi Jogati Adalu).

In many cases, the reasons may be sought in religious superstition - the desire to avert the evils, the displeasure of the goddess, to earn the pleasure and favours of the goddess, the desire to get cured from certain skin disease (particularly leucoderma), to keep the vows and oaths taken at various times of suffering etc. Family custom and

tradition is also an important reason.. Strong devotion to the goddess also acts as a reason for becoming a Jogati. It is also believed that eunuchs become Jogatis in order to save themselves from social degradation. Lastly, the desire to earn an easy livelihood has been important reason as the collection of alms is one of the privileges of a Jogati and normally a Jogati is not denied alms, especially on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Furthermore, the ceremonies are to be performed in the company of low caste persons and the untouchables; a part of the initiation ceremony is to be completed in the colony of untouchables - the tanners - at least through five visits. They also worship Matangi whose abode is the house of a tanner. Perhaps, such requirements serve as good mechanisms of reduction of social inequalities perpetuated by the rigid caste hierarchy.

The Jogatis hailing from the poor families certainly collect alms from more than five houses and do not share any part of it with the needy/hungry as enjoined. On Tuesdays and Fridays, they collect alms from almost every house in the village and some of them go to the adjoining

villages too. Therefore, the quantity of alms collected on the two days every week could be adequate or more than sufficient for the maintenance of the family. Moreover, some Jogatis collect alms every day. It is also a fact that even some non-Jogatis collect alms under the cover of Jogatis. Furthermore, the Jogatis collect a good amount of gifts whenever they visit the main temple, especially on the festive occasions which are looked forward to by the Jogatis. It may, therefore, be said that institution of Jogatis has created a social problem, viz., beggary.

The most undesirable aspect of the institution is the practice of dedicating girls. Some parents in order to avert the wrath of the goddess dedicate one of their daughters as a Jogati. When an young girl becomes a Jogati, she is denied the privilege of marriage. Therefore, she is compelled to become a prostitute.

The Jogatis are required to collect alms irrespective of their socio-economic status. The Jogatis from the rich families collect alms from five houses merely to complete the formality. But their initiation into the Jogatihood, the wearing of the 'dress', the visits to the colony of the

untouchables, mixing with the Jogatis of low castes and the untouchables, the collection of alms etc., may undermine one's family status. In a few cases, the acceptance of Jogatihood may mean social derecognition of the family for the purposes of matrimonial relations, or the withdrawal of proposals of marriage, and so on.

Another undesirable aspect of the institution is the usage of the term in a euphemistic sense and the practice of equating all jogatis with prostitutes. A lay man uses the term Jogati to refer to lewd women, and as has been pointed out earlier, only the Mangalarati Jogati and those who obtain the Sūle muttu become prostitutes, and of these the former is not a common prostitute; their number is insignificant and has been rapidly dwindling. Moreover, they stand apart from other type of Jogatis with different status. In other words, prostitution is not an essential feature of the institution of Jogatis as it is with the institution of dēvadāsis.

The institution of Jogatis is very popular among the low caste people, the untouchables, the poor and the uneducated. The high caste Hindus and the people of higher socio-

economic status look down upon the institution and do not allow their women to become Jogatis, because of the ceremonies, rules of conduct, mixing of all on specific occasions etc. But it must be admitted that for the poor and the uneducated, the institution has provided material and spiritual security. The collection of alms, strictly speaking, is not beggary. The Jogatis may be regarded as religious mendicants instead of beggars.

Compared to the institution of dēvadāsis, the institution of Jogatis is still viable and strong in its socio-religious aspects. Broadly speaking, it has not degenerated into an institution of prostitutes for the simple reason that there is only one Jogati of the Dēvadāsi type (i.e., the Mangalarati Jogati) and the women who obtain the Sūle Muttu to become prostitutes are isolated from the other Jogatis because of their full time profession of prostitution. Another reason is that unlike the dēvadāsis the Jogatis are not attached to any temple. Instead, they continue to be wives and mothers in normal families in most of the cases. Its prospects do not indicate its degeneration, especially when prostitution via the institution of Jogatis is on the decline and has even become unpopular among those who seek Sūle Muttu for their daughters.

The Patradavaru:

Literally speaking, the term Patradavaru means stage action. When the institution of Dēvadāsis was in its full bloom and the number of dedicated girls was large, women in the temple service could not be engaged all the day nor could they be paid for their maintenance. Under such circumstances, the dēvadāsis were permitted to seek service under private individuals socially well placed, when they were not engaged in temple service. Hence, they took to singing and dancing in social functions in the presence of persons of high social status, for which they were paid with munificence. Some of them took to stage-action too. Those women who specialised themselves in stage action ultimately became professional actresses. In North Karnataka such women came to be known as the Patradavaru. Historically, this institution is a legacy of the Vijayanagara regime.

The unique feature of this institution is that the Patradavaru are not dedicated to any deity - male or female; yet they sing and dance on festive occasions in the temples of the presiding deity of the village. They also render such services to high caste Hindus or to the rich in the village

on festive occasions like marriages and birth anniversaries. Until recently no marriage in the family of a wealthy person and the village headman in North Karnataka was performed without singing and dancing by these women. The second unique feature of this institution has been that these women never earned their livelihood as prostitutes. Instead, they remained as concubines or mistresses to a wealthy person or the village headman. Even today many instances are cited of these women who were as loyal, faithful and devoted as any married women.

The Veshis:

The term Veshi is the corrupt form of the word, Veshya - a prostitute. But not all Veshis are common prostitutes. Many of them are concubines. The term is also used in a euphemistic sense to refer to the women dedicated to a god or goddess or an object of worship. She is commonly found in the Dharwar district of Karnataka and is usually dedicated to the presiding deity of the village, and normally god Hanuman, in the same manner as a dēvadāsi is dedicated. But, after the dedication, she is at liberty to live with anybody from her own caste or from higher caste. She can, thus, be a mistress to a single person all her life, or she could change

her masters. If nobody was found to take her readily as a mistress and provide her maintenance, she is free to take up prostitution as a means of her livelihood.

Whether she is a mistress or a prostitute, she is often required to render a few services to the temple to which she is dedicated. During the days of annual fairs and the festivals, she is required to carry the sacred lamp, take part in the okuli - game played with coloured water in which persons of certain specified castes of the village throw water on women who in turn beat them with a trunk of a flower tree which is indigeneously called as Kanagila - olender (Nerium odorum). For this she is awarded with a saree every year. A Veshi is also asked to prepare Mangalasūtra of a bride, if she is present on the occasion.

The Muralis:

The Muralis are girls dedicated to Khandōbā, an Avatār or incarnation of Siya, by their parents before they are born or in infancy or early childhood. The custom is confined to Maharashtra State wherein the barren women promise to sacrifice their first-born daughters if Khandōbā will make them

mothers of many children. After the fulfilment of such a wish, the first-born girl is offered to Khandoba and set apart for Him by tying a necklace of seven cowries around the little girl's neck. When she grows up to be of marriageable age, she is formally wedded to the Khanda or dagger of Khandōbā and becomes his nominal wife. Henceforth, she is forbidden to become the married wife of any man, and as a result she usually leads an infamous life, earning her means of livelihood by immoral traffic. Some of these girls also become nomadic Muralis; others become ordinary public women in any town or city; while a few remain as concubines for years with one man or other²¹.

The parents of Muralis do not feel ashamed to take their daughters' earnings, because the latter belong to the Khandōbā and what they do is not sin in the eyes of His devotees. People belonging to such castes as Kunbi, Mahar, Mang and other low castes make Muralis of their daughters in this fashion. Many high-caste people also make a pilgrimage to Jojuri, the headquarters of the worship of Khandoba in Poona district to pay their vows; but they never dedicate their own girls to Khandoba, but buy children from low-caste parents for a small amount of money and offer them in lieu of their own children.

The vow is often taken in their own homes in their native villages, and is frequently made in the case of sickness; if the God cures the sick one, their child shall be dedicated to Khandoba. At the time of oath making, yellow powder is smeared on the child and a cowry necklace is put on. When an auspicious time arrives, they go on pilgrimage to Jojuri where the marriage takes place with the dagger of the idol which is kept in the temple. If the family is unable to make the journey, the ceremony is performed at home.

The duties of the Muralis are to sing impure or lewd songs in praise of Khandoba; to perform night worship and song-services in honour of their patrons at different places; and they earn their livelihood in this way. A manuscript which a Murali uses was full of these lewd songs, which are sung in the night services and are called Jagrane or night watches. They also add other similar songs for the entertainment of their patrons to whose houses they are invited to perform night services. So long as they are young and attractive there is demand for them, and their parents receive large sums of money and other presents. But soon the old age

stamps its awful mark upon them and their sad, pale faces can but excite the pity of the compassionate²².

Boys are also dedicated to Khandoba and are known as Waghyas. They put on a little tiger-skin wallet suspended from their necks. They are popularly spoken of as Khandoba's dogs. They are at liberty to marry, and do not necessarily lead a wandering life unless they choose to do so. The nomadic ones are usually disreputable. However, the custom of dedicating girls to Khandoba in the name of religion has received a deathblow in the hands of Christian Missionaries and the Government of Maharashtra during the last few decades.

The Nautch-girls or Kalawantins:

The institution of the nautch-girl is a very ancient one, coming down to the Hindu society even from the days of the Mahābhārat. Though the nautch-girls and the dēvadāsis are identical in South India, the former form a separate class/caste called Kalawantin and are identified with the temple service. But they visit the temples only on invitation of the temple authorities for a performance. They are professional singers and dancers, and their performances include

22. Ibid., p: 107

group singing and dancing or singing alone. They are said to be invariably courtesans, and differ from the common public women, and even from the Muralis, Jogtins, and Bhavins, who are also dedicated to the Gods in the sense that they have had a religious and social status from time immemorial and are considered a necessity in the temple and in the home, on marriage and other festive occasions.

The nautch-girl often begins her career of training under teachers at an early age of five years. She is taught to read, dance and sing and instructed in every seductive art. Her songs are usually amorous; and while she is still a girl, before she can realize the moral bearings of her choice of life, she makes her debut as a nautch-girl in the community by the observation of custom.

Having never married, a nautch-girl can never be a widow. Hence, her presence at weddings is considered most auspicious. In Western India, she is the one that ties the wedding necklace, provided the marriage party can afford her presence. It is believed that her defiled hands become a bright omen that the bride may never be a widow. Besides weddings, she graces many other festive occasions such as the thread ceremony, house warmings, and evening parties and

entertainments. They are also often in requisition to complete the programme to bid farewell to some Government official or to entertain the then Viceroys, Governors and other officials, or to honour some European travellers.

Since a greater number of these women are childless, their ranks are reinforced by adoption of little girls who are bought or obtained by other means. Illegitimate children are often passed on to them and due to the periodical famines that occur in India, a large number of girls find a home with this class of persons. In addition, young widows often go over to them under the influence of temptation so that they too can lead a better life characterized by honour, gait and richly dressed clothes and plenty of jewels.

If a nautch-woman's children are boys, they used to be brought up as drummers and fiddlers; but nowadays, they are educating their boys and helping them move up on the ladder of social status. The girls must invariably follow in their mother's footsteps. With the dancing girls, a daughter takes precedence over of a son, and an adopted daughter takes the same place, and is entitled to the same rights as an adopted son in other castes.

For many a century the dancing girls had the monopoly of all the education among women. They were the only women that were taught to read and sing in public in the country; and hence these two accomplishments were so associated with the nautch-girl as to be considered disreputable for respectable women.

To quote Fuller, these dancing girls are rich, beautiful and very attractive, besides being witty and pleasant in conversation; and they are the only woman that move freely in men's society in India²³. In Punjab, the dancing-girls enjoy public favour; they move very freely in native society than public women in civilized countries are ever allowed to do. In fact, greater attention and respect is shown to them than to married ladies. In the North West provinces, it is said, a dancing girl is treated with as much courtesy as if she were a princess descended from a distinguished royal line.

The ample earnings obtained by the dancing-girl and the comparative luxury in which she lives renders the profession an attractive one. They charge very large sums for providing entertainment on the occasion of a birth or marriage. How-

23. Ibid., p.:130.

ever, it is saddening to note that many royal and aristocratic families are irretrievably ruined by these women. Many a wealthy man has had to court poverty and disgrace on this account. Even in middle class society, many fritter away their youth and money to quench the insatiable thirst of sanctified immorality. Further, many young men become fascinated with bright dancing girls. The power and influence of these girls over the young men has ultimately become a stepping stone to his moral and financial ruin as he seeks her further acquaintance. Moreover, it has also resulted in the ruining of domestic peace and in the estrangement between husband and wife.

In 1892 there came into existence, in Madras, an organised Anti-Nautch Movement by educated Hindus expressing disapproval of the dedication of girls to temple service, and defining it to be practically a life of immorality. It also aimed at purifying personal, family and public life. The movement has done a great deal of good in educating public opinion, and in enlisting men to refuse to attend nautch parties, or to have them at the festivities in their own home. Also later Anti-Nautch and Purity Associations have been organised in different parts of the country campaigning against this pernicious practice which is a blot on society and a wrong to women.

CHAPTER IV

BASAVI SYSTEM IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Like in Karnataka State, in Andhra Pradesh too there are numerous epigraphical references to establish that several women associated with temples in different capacities. Most of them were musicians, engaged in decorating temple by drawing raṅgavallis and women performing menial works like cleaning the utensils, cleaning the temple precincts etc. However, these women do not include dancers who were proficient enough in dance and music and attached to the temples as sānis*. For instance, one of the inscriptions from Nādendla presents an elaborate list of women who were employed by the Mūlasthāna temple authorities and of whom some were experts in instrumental music, while some were umbrella holders¹. Similarly, another inscription from Drākshārāma dated 1084 A.D. refers two women who were employed for pounding duty, cleaning the temple and fetching water².

Numerous temple inscriptions in Andhra Pradesh refer to women who were proficient enough in dance and music and attached to the temples as sānis. Dance (nritya) and music (gīta)

1. SII, IV, No. 677.

2. Ibid., No. 1015.

*The term Sāni is a derivative of the Sanskrit word Śvāmini.

are included among 16 kinds of upachāras (shodasopachārās) to be offered to God and therefore, young damsels who were skilful in these two fine arts were attached to the temples for the purpose of conducting dance at the time of daily raṅga-bhōga performed in the raṅga-mandapa of the temples.

In inscriptions the term sāni is also referred to as vilāsini³, nartaki⁴, bhōgam⁵, nattava⁶, lanja⁷, vārakānta⁸, ganika⁹, Patra, mānikyamu¹⁰, Basavi¹¹ etc. The synonymous words such as bhōgam, lanja, vārakānta and ganika would probably indicate that even harlots were associated with the temples.

This indicates that the then prostitutes were not considered impious provided they were good at dance and music. Further, though the word, sāni is synonymously used to refer to Basavi, this term has religious association with Saivism. The above

3 AREP, 1963 No. B 207

4 SII, X, No. 395

5 Ibid, VI No. 655; HAS, 13, No.1

6 Ibid., No. 756

7 Ibid. No. 941; in the current Telugu this word is synonymously used for prostitute; in Kannada also the word Sūle, which means prostitute is used in the medieval inscriptions to refer to temple dancer. See for instance A.P. Kn., No.13. In Tamil inscriptions we find the terms sāni as well as deva-adiyar or embern man-adiyar can be noticed (Skt. Devadāsī; TTD inscription II, No. 86, V.No. 32.)

8 SII; V, No.1028

9 Ibid; V, No. 164; EI, VI pp.38 ff. Text.II,152-55.

10 Ibid; VI, No.1052; Both Pātra and mānikyamu figure in this inscription

11 Ibid; IV, No. 702.

epigraphical evidence reveal that the Basavi used to perform services in the temples to which they were dedicated.

Further, though the term dēvadāsi is also often used in the same sense in literature, strangely it is seldom found in the inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh. In the words of Vinay Kumar, "we come across the word dēvadāsi for the first time in the Arthasāstra of Kautilya, wherein old temple virgins (dēvadāsis) are required to card cotton as they are no longer needed at the temples"¹². According to Chatterjee¹³, in ancient works seven types of dāsis were mentioned on the basis of their recruitment. They were:

- 1 Datta : One who gives herself as a gift to a temple
- 2 Vikrita : One who has been sold for the same purpose;
- 3 Bhritya : One who offers herself as a temple servant for the prosperity of her family;
- 4 Bhakta : One who joins a temple out of strong devotion to the deity;
- 5 Hrita : One who is enticed away and is presented to a temple;
- 6 Alaṅkāra : One who, being well trained in her profession and profusely decked, is presented to a temple by kings and noble men with a view to adding to the magnificence and charm of temples;
- 7 Rudraganika: or Gōpika: One who receives regular wages from a temple and is employed to sing and dance in the temple at the time of worship;

12 Bhaskaran Nair (ed) : Bharati Bhānam, pp. 394-95.

13 Santosh Chatterjee : Devadāsi (temple Dancer), pp. 32-33.

In the historic past it was a practice for the kings, chiefs, nobles as well as common folk to donate women to the temples. It is not improbable that in such cases the girls might be purchased from their parents by the donors and the girls belonged to fourth varna. Moreover, we have got several instances of donating girls to the temples by their parents or grandparents with a view to earning either religious merit (punya) or to fulfilling a vow taken earlier. In most of the cases the donors made adequate provision for the maintenance of dancing girls endowed by them. The inscriptions reveal that the girls were dedicated to the temples as dancers at a very tender age. That even the girls of eight years age were taken by the temples as sānis is evident from the Chēbrōlu inscription of Jayapa-nāyaka.

The Vēlpūru inscription dated 1254 A.D., states that Bayyaladevi and Gaṇapathirāju gifted bhaṇḍāramu Akkamma as a sāni to the God Rāmēswaradēva of Vēlpunūru and that two Khaṇḍikās of wet land, one mārturu of dry land, a house site and a garden were also given, obviously for her maintenance¹⁴. Another inscription from Simhāchalam, dated 1266 A.D. records that Vīranarasimhadēva endowed as many as one hundred women

14 SII, X.No.344

to God Narahari (i.e., Narasimha of Simhāchalam) for performing music¹⁵. Yet another inscription engraved on a pillar in the Ēlēsvarasvāmi temple at Yēlēs'varam and dated 1271 A.D., records that a certain Dēva'saraṇu Mankiṣeṭṭi gifted away his two grand daughters as dancing girls to the God Ēlēs'varadeva. The two girls are stated to have been handed over to Sri Dakṣhiṇāmurti Śivagurudēva, probably the sthānapati of the temple¹⁶. Similarly, an epigraph at Velpuram in Guntur district states that mahāmandalēsvara Kōṭa Gaṇapatidēva donated Bandaram Akkamma as sāni to the God Rāmēs'vara and endowed some land-site to her for her services¹⁷. The Nadendla inscription of Saka 1061 refers to certain lands assigned to sānis and some other servants of the temple¹⁸. The Moparru inscriptions of Saka 1092 gives a list of sanis attached to the temple of Cōdēsvara-Mahādēva of Mroparru and the extent of land granted to each by way of emoluments¹⁹. The Siripuram and Masilipatnam epigraphs also record land assignments to the sānis attached to the local temples²⁰. P.V.P.Sastry, while writing about the sānis, their positions in the society and their contri-

15. Ibid., VI, No.1197

16. Md. Abdul Wahidkhan (ed): A Monograph on Yeleswaram Excavations, pp; 62-63, No.25.

17. P.V.P.Sastri: The Kakatiyas of Warangal, p:286

18. SII, Vol.X.No. 107

19. Ibid, No.177

20. Ibid, Nos. 177, 192.

bution to the culture, states "they were not ordinary prostitutes as generally mistaken. They were respectable married women leading family life. But they were attached to the temples for a set purpose i.e., to perform dance and music before the God on behalf of the donor. Because nritya (dance) and gīta (music) are also included in the sixteen kinds of worship (shōdaśopachāras), the devotees generally used to make the arrangement in temples on their behalf. The temple authorities allot time for their performance, and see that the arrangement was being continued without any lapse on the part of sānis".²¹

It is known from a number of inscriptions from Simhāchalam that there existed two classes of sānis viz., Sāṃprādaya-muvāru and sānulu. Mrs. A.Vaidehi Krishnamurthy holds that Sāṃprādāyasānulu were permanent employees of the temple who enjoyed hereditary rights²². C.V.Ramachandra Rao, holding a different opinion, states that Sāṃprādaya-muvāru were those who were attached to the temples and remained unmarried and that the sānulu were those who lived independently, married, but were employed by the temples

21. P.V.P.Sastri : OP. cit., p;286.

22. A. Vaidehi Krishnamurthy; Social and Economic conditions in Eastern Deccan (from A.D. 1050 to A.D. 1250) p. 60.

on a part time basis²³. However, the epigraphical evidences reveal that sāṃpradāyamu does not refer to sānīs alone, but refer to a group of dancers, musicians and a music master. For ex., an inscription from Srīkūrmam, dated 1250 A.D. refers to Vira Narasimhadēvara-sāṃpradāyamu which comprised of 30 sānīs, six madyala kāndru (mridaṅgam players), one dance master (nattuva), one mukhari, one āvajakādu, one karada-kādu, one kāhala-kādu, and one Mēlināyaka²⁴. This obviously indicates that the king Vīranarasimhadēva employed this group and hence came to be known as Vīranarasimhadēva-Sāṃpradāyamu. Another inscription from Simhāchalam states that at the time of offering dhūpa to God Narasimha both in the morning and evening, two groups each comprising of one mukhari and two lanjas and belonging to sāni-sāṃpradāyamu were to sing maṅgala-gītams (one group in the morning and the other in the evening)²⁵. It is significant to note that a number of inscriptions from Simhāchalam refer to both sānīs and sāṃpradāyamu-sānīs as rendering same kind of service in the same temple by turns as if according to some mutual agreement. For instance, an inscription from Simhāchalam, dated 1358

23. Ramachandra Rao, C.V.: Administration and Society in Medieval Andhra (A.D.1038-1538) under the Later Eastern Gangas and the Suryavamsa Gajapathis, pp: 304.

24. SII, V.No.1188.

25. Ibid., VI, No. 941.

A.D. records that a certain Patra Jiyamalavidyādhara made a gift of two fly whisks (chāmaras) which were to be waved by the sānīs and two sāṃpradāyamu-sānīs to God Narasimha both in the morning and evening²⁶. Some inscriptions from Siṃhāchalam itself differentiate these two groups as sānulasamayamu and sāṃpradāyamu. An inscription dated 1441 A.D. records the provision of four sānīs, two from sānula-samayamu and two from sāṃpradāyamu for waving fly whisks during ubhaya-dūpa kālamulu²⁷. This indicates that the sānīs, other than those belonging to the sāṃpradāyamu group had their own guild. In fact, one of the Siṃhāchalam inscriptions refer to some agreement between the sānulu and sāṃpradāya-mānikkamulu staying at Siṃhagiri (Siṃhāchalam) according to which if the sānīs of one group harm the interests of the other, they would be expelled²⁸. It further states that the same is also applicable to the Sudra community (i.e., the sānīs of the Sudra community). In this context, it is to be noted that the use of the term sāṃpradāyamu occurs more frequently in the post-Kākatīya period and confined to the area now covered by Viśākhapatnam and Srikākulam districts.

26. Ibid., No. 1028.

27. Ibid., No. 954.

28. Ibid., No. 1202

It is known from the epigraphic records these temple servants by name sānis formed themselves into a corporate body called sani-munnurvuru (sani-300). The numerical suffix in this expression may be compared with its counterpart in the terms like telike - 1000, ayyavāli-500 etc. However, there is no unanimous opinion among the scholars about the exact connotation of this numerical suffix. One scholar considered it to denote the number of families from which the sānis were drawn²⁹: Although some big temples in South India had as many as a hundred sānis attached to them³⁰, it cannot be expected of small temples to have the same number of sānis associated with them. But a good number of epigraphs refer to the existence of 'three hundred sānis' (sāni-munnūrvuru) even in small temples. For example, an inscription from Kommuru records that six Uttamagāṇḍa-māḍas were gifted for maintaining a perpetual lamp in the Agastīśvara temple and that the sāni munnūrvuru were to receive the gift money and to supply one nandī-māna of ghee everyday³¹. There is no evidence to show that the Agastīśvara temple was so big to have 300 sānis to be attached to it. Moreover, it is noteworthy that this numerical suffix is attached to some other temple servants also.

29. A. Vaidehi. Krishnamurthy; op.cit. p. 58.

30. AREP, 1893, p.15.

31. SII, X, No.80

An inscription from the Nagesvara temple at Chēbrōlu and dated 1076 A.D. refers to munūrūvuru ayyalu and munūrūvurusānulu.³² Another inscription from the same place and dated 1113 A.D. also refers to munūrūvuru-sānulu and munūrūvuruayyanulu.³³ Therefore, the numerical expression three hundred is conventional and does not indicate "the actual numbers of (sānis) employees on the rolls of a particular temple which was not possible always, but the strength of the governing body of that profession incorporated in a big temple like Srīsaila, Drākshārāma and Tripurāntaka. All employees in the branch temples affiliated to the main temple were the general members of parent corporate body which had 300 governing members"³⁴. In this context, it may be recalled that the Sīmhāchalam inscription referred to above mentions sānulāsamayamu which means the guild of sānis.

Furthermore, the sānis in the temples belonged to different castes and ranks. Deep sense of dedication to god coupled with proficiency in dancing and music must have been responsible for this. An inscription from Malkāpuram refers to two sānis, among others, as daughters of two settis.³⁵

32. Ibid., VI, No. 109.

33. Ibid., Nos. 101, 110 and 113.

34. P.V.P.Sastry: op. cit., pp.287

35. Ibid., X.No.396.

Based on inscriptions it can be noted that the sānis often hailed from respectable families and that they were married and had sons with higher positions in the ladder of social status. There are also instances of either the bhōga-strīs (Tel. Lañjiya) of the chiefs and kings or their daughters serving temples as sānis. An inscription from Mukhalingam, dated 1127 A.D. refers to sāni of the Madhukēśvara temple who was the daughter of Vennama-Peggada. Erakamma and the wife of Pasāyita Kommināyaka³⁶. Another inscription from the same place dated 1126 A.D., refers to a sani of the same temple as the daughter of Gālapanāyaka and her son was a sasānika³⁷. Yet another inscription from Drākshārāma, dated 1157 A.D., records that a certain Bayyapanāyaka, who was the servant (banṭu) of mahāmaṇḍalēśvara Kulōttunga chōla Gonkarāṣu made the gift of a perpetual lamp for the merit of his mother Bānamamma, who was the sāni of the Pandīśvara temple; Bānamamma or Banambika as mentioned in the Sanskrit portion of the inscription is described as tat (i.e.. Pandīśvarasya) = Pada - Sēvābhirata and vilasini³⁸. One of the Mukhalingam inscriptions dated 1108 A.D. records the gift of a perpetual lamp to the god Madhukīśvara by Vāsama who was a Madugudi-sāni (i.e., the sani of the Madhukīśvara temple) and who was the concubine

36. Ibid., VI. No. 1102.

37. Ibid., No. 1027

38. Ibid., IV.No. 1130.

of Rājēndra chōda-kula tilaka - brahmamārāyar Daddapa nāyaka.
She was further stated to be the daughter of Sivappa rattadi³⁹.

Basing on some inscriptions of Vijayanagara period it is noted that often the daughters as well as the granddaughters of dance masters and musicians, who were obviously attached to the temples, extended their services to temples as sānis and naturally they were the dancers of superior calibre⁴⁰.

The temple girls were beautiful, charming, graceful and highly talented because the human tendency is to offer the best to the god. It is usually believed that the dedication of the temple girls to the temple takes place when they are eight years old and in course of her training she acquired good knowledge of Sanskrit and Telugu in addition to proficiency in different types of dance and music. Obviously the dance master (nattavudu) attached to the temple imparted required training for ten years to these young girls. During the training period they have to wake up before Sun rise and they used to have instruction in singing and dancing for an hour or so. In the evening it is conducted in a hall. Further, some of the sānis were highly praised for their mastery.

39. Ibid., V., No. 1083

40. Ibid., VI. No. 901, 655, 818; IV., No. 772.

over dance and for their charm. A Siṃhāchalam inscription dated 1299 A.D., describes the varanāris of the temple as lāvanya-guṇa - Sampūrṇah, Pūrṇa - chandr-ānana-sriyah and vilāsa - rasa-kalyāṇih⁴¹.

The foremost duty of the sānis was to entertain gods daily and during festivals with their dance and music for the performance of which a temple is provided with raṅga-mandapa. Śrīnātha, a celebrated poet of Kondavidu gives information in his work Kāśīkhandam regarding the Mārgi and Dēsi styles of dance being performed by temple girls. He says that in the Bhīmēśvara temple at Drakshārāma the Gaṇḍharvās and Apsarās danced during Saturday celebrations in the above said styles⁴². Similarly, Abbe Dubois saw dancing during car festival at Tirupati and he records that on this occasion, Lord Venkatēśwara through His Brahmin priests selected new dancing girls from the crowd that came to celebrate the festivals⁴³. Thus, the foremost duty of the sānis was to please the Gods with their dance and music. Yet they performed other functions too.

41 Ibid., VI, No. 1137.

42 Srinatha : Kāśīkhandam, IV, V.

43 Abbe J.A. Dubois : op. cit., p.601

The functions that the dancing girls at temples discharged can be divided into two categories. viz.,

1. those connected with their professional talents and
2. those related to the administration of temples. The first category includes various sacred tasks such as waving fly whisks to the deities on the occasion of street procession, holding lamps in front of the image of deity or at times during the procession, singing maṅgala-gītams and rendering nāmasaṁkīrtana etc.⁴⁴

The inscriptions of West Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts refer to the administrative functions of the sānis. It seems that especially the guild sāni-munnūrvuru was either independently or along with other temple officials were assigned with these duties. For instance, an epigraph from Juttiga of West Godavari district, dated in the 15th regnal year of Sarvalōkāśraya Viṣṇuvardhana, records that the sthānādhipatis, sāni-munnūrvuru and nibandhakāru were assigned the duty of protecting the gift viz., a perpetual lamp made by a certain Pōtaya-bhatlu to the God Sōmēśvara⁴⁵. Yet another inscription from the same place, dated 1221 A.D. reveals that the sthānādhipatis, srīkaranamu sāni-munnuruvuru and nibandhakāru were also to protect a similar gift made to the same God⁴⁶.

44. SII., VI Nos. 668, 890, 904, 939, 941, 982 etc.,

45. Ibid, X., No.12

46. Ibid, No.268

It is also significant to note that the gift money was entrusted to the sāni-munnūrvuru who were required to maintain the charity for which the amount was endowed. An inscription from Ghantasāla of Krishna district dated 1144 A.D., indicates that Kōta Kommīsetti made a gift of a perpetual lamp to the God Jaladīśvara-Mahādēva and entrusted ten rājarāja-mādas to the sāni-munnūrvuru who were also to maintain the gift lamp by supplying two sāniya-mānas of ghee everyday⁴⁷. Yet another record from Kōta-ppakonda of Guntur district states that the shepherd received the sheep for maintaining a perpetual lamp with the consent of the mahājanas of Kāvūru and the sānis of the Trikōtīśvara temple⁴⁸. There are numerous references to the liquid measures sāniya-māna or sāniyambātīmāna⁴⁹ and sāniyambati-tavva⁵⁰ used in the temples to measure ghee. These measures were obviously standardised by the sānis or sāni-murrūrvuru of the temple concerned. Thus, it is evident that the functions of temple girls are religious as well as secular in nature. They had manifold duties which required not only professional skill but also administrative capability and for this they received enough grants from kings, nobles, devotees and munificent persons.

47. Ibid., No. 115

48. Ibid., IV, No. 918

49. Ibid., X, Nos. 115, 126, 191

50. Ibid., No. 79, V, No. 67

Grants:

There is ample evidence to account for the fact that the temple girls were provided with sufficient means for their livelihood. Kings, chiefs and rich devotees made arrangements by way of granting villages, lands, money, houses, sheep etc., to conduct regular worship and other services like music and dance in the temples. Moreover, the temple dancers were granted annual wages and/or land for their services in the temple. An inscription from Konidena, dated 1148 A.D., records the gift of the village Jonnaprālūru for conducting havi, bali, archana and for maintaining the sānis and mānis in the temple of Bhīmēśvara-mahādeva by the chief Tribhuvana-malladēvachōḍa⁵¹ at the time of consecration of that deity. An undated inscription from Malkāpuram states that Kāśiśvara-siva-ayyamgāru made a gift of one Khandika and tūmus of land to each of 11 sanis whose names are recorded⁵². Similarly, a record from Yerikapadu dated Śaka 1096 mentioned the gift of land made to the sānis and mānis on the occasion of Uttarayana-samkranti⁵³. A certain Ammanayaka made a gift in Śake 1163 to God Agastīśvara at Kolakalur and it

51. SII., vi, No. 610

52. Ibid., X, No. 396

53. Ibid., X. 193, Yerikapadu,

was entrusted to sāni, māni, nibandhākandru⁵⁴. Another record from Sekuru mentions a gift entrusted to Sāni-māni-nibandha-kandru⁵⁵. Yet another inscription from Panchadarla dated in Sake 359 refers to the gift of 4 kha. of land made to the sānis for their services to the temple⁵⁶.

Furthermore, in Simhāchalam temple money was also gifted for maintaining different services such as waving fly whisks, providing garlands etc,. An inscription dated 1367 A.D. records the endowment made to a sāni for waving fly whisks to the God during both the sandya and procession⁵⁷. An inscription dated 1375 A.D. records that Appabayyāmdēvi gifted 10 mādas for offering 2 kunchas prasadam (sacred food) to a sani who was to perform vinjāmarasēva to God Narasimha and supply a tulasi garland⁵⁸. Another inscription dated 1400 A.D. records the gift of 10 mādas for providing 2 kunchas of prasāda to 2 sānis for waving fly whisks in the presence of the Lord⁵⁹. An inscription dated 1453 A.D. records that Pavadaraja Jiyanna gifted 10 saskarnitankas paid in the temple treasury for providing share in the prasāda to the sānis who were to perform dance and wave the fly whisks before the God⁶⁰. An inscription records the gift of 4

54. Ibid., X. 292, Kolakalam

55. Ibid., X. 405, Sekuru

56. Ibid., VI. 668

57. Ibid., VI. No.815

58. Ibid., VI, 901

59. Ibid., 999

60. Ibid., 1050.

puttis of land for providing food and wages to one sāni who was employed to wave the fly whisks both at dawn and dusk⁶¹. Yet another inscription dated 1290 A.D. states that Dasapandita, who was the antaranga mahāpātra of the Eastern Ganga king Narasimha-II paid 20 ganḍa nishkas into the temple treasury of Siṃhāchalam for maintaining two flutists and 4 sānis for rendering music in the temple of God Narasimha⁶². Further, it is heartening to note that, apart from the wages, lands and share in prasādams, the sānis were provided with accomodation also⁶³. The Chēbrōlu inscription of Jāyapa, the general of Kākatīya Ganapati, dated 1235 A.D. records that the former set up the god Chōḍīśvara at Tāmrapura and in front of the temple he got constructed two rows of double storeyed houses for 16 best ganikās (purato = sya shōdasānām vāra - ganikānām dribhūmikā griham ali-dvayēna ramyany - achirāt = Jiyāya - Sainyēsah⁶⁴). Thus, care was taken to provide for the food and shelter for the sānis either by those who built the temples or by those who endowed the sānis so that the latter can fully dedicate themselves to the pious duty of serving God by singing in His praise and dancing to His pleasure. The

61. SII, VI, 786

62. Ibid., 1137

63. Ibid, V. No. 1188

64. EI, VI, pp. 38 ff. text lines 152-55

sānis also on their part were highly devotional and benevolent. Numerous inscriptions testify their liberal endowments to the temples. The temple dancers - Lingasāni and Tiruveṅkatāmānikkam, daughters of Tippasāni are stated to have made gifts of money to the Gods Venkatesvara and Gōvindārāja of Tirumala and Tirupati respectively at frequent intervals⁶⁵. Another sāni named Sevvusāni serving the same temple is stated to have gifted 200 panams for providing offerings to the deity Vignēsvara, installed by her in the nritya-mantapa of the Kapileśvarasvami temple at Tirupati⁶⁶. Similarly an inscription of Eastern Ganga King, Anantavarma, dated Śāka 1020, records the gift of 10 māḍas for burning two perpetual lamps to the Madhukēsvara by the dancer Tyāgi, and his daughter Bhumandi⁶⁷. An inscription of the same King registered the gift of 5 māḍas for burning a perpetual lamp to the God Madhukēsvara by Erakamma, daughter of Chuttadi, the sāni of Vishnudeva⁶⁸. In addition, some inscriptions from Mukhalīngam⁶⁹, Juttiga⁷⁰ and Kollūru⁷¹ record the gifts of perpetual lamps made by the temple dancers.

65. TTD Inscriptions, IV, Nos. 21 (1533 A.D.) No.49 (1535 A.D.) and No.146 (1540 A.D.).

66. TTD Inscriptions, V, No. 172.

67. SII, Vol. VI.No. 1033.

68. Ibid. No. 1037

69. Ibid., V. No.s. 1026, 1083 and 1094

70. Ibid., X. No. 110

71. Ibid., X. No. 108

A critical study of the institution of dēvadāsi or sāni reveal many bright facets of it. The sānis hailed from noble families and their chief objective in life was to worship the Almighty by their music and dance. To achieve this laudable purpose necessary training was imparted to them right from their childhood. Most of the temples contained nāṭya-mandapās where the sānis used to dance gracefully to the accompaniment of devotional songs. One of the inscriptions of Pratāparudra Gajapati records that the King ordered that only Gītagōvinda⁷² dance should be performed before the God Jagannātha of Puri during nights and that the dancing was to be conducted from the end of the evening dhūpa till the bed-time dhūpa. He is further stated to have enjoined that all the batches of dancing girls including the Telaṅga batch were to learn only Gīta-gōvinda (The term Telaṅga may refer to the dancing girls of the Andhra country). The music and dance of the sānis were capable of winning the hearts of common folk and to lead them on the path of devotion. Consequently, the sānis could enjoy respect and were even entrusted with administrative duties in the temples, apart from providing with free grants,

72. JASB, 1893, p.97, Ins. No.6 quoted by K.Satyanarayana, in his A study of the History and Culture of the Andhras, (Vol.II) pp. 88-89.

73. SII, Vol. IX No.50, XX.No.35.

74504

tax free lands, etc.,⁷³ The then society also made some dancing girls trustees to some grants given to the temple by other donors⁷⁴. The very fact that the sānis were regarded as auspicious vouches for their sanctity as evidenced by the practice which was obtaining in the Srirangam temple where "one of the dēvadāsis adorned herself after bath and stood in the Alagiya maṇavalan Tirumantapa well in sight of the god" during the early morning service when the elephant, the cow etc., were presented⁷⁵. It is perhaps probable that a similar practice might have been prevalent in the medieval Āndhra temples too.

Moreover, all the seven classes of devadāsis were present in the temples during the medieval period. They were economically independent and did not constitute as the members of the main household. Many of them became wealthy, owning houses and lands given by either the donors or temples. They, like other sections of the people, could bequeath their property to the children. It seems that the funeral pyre of every girl of the dancing caste should be lit with fire brought from the temple⁷⁶.

74. EI. VI.No.219

75. V.N.Hari Rao: History of the Sri rangam Temple, p: 294.

76. F.R.Feeaming: Gazetteer of the Godavari District, 1907, p.208.

Thus, it is paradoxical that though the institution of sānis as temple dancers was in vogue till the turn of the 20th century there are few epigraphical references to them in A.P. from the 16th century onwards. This may be attributed to the serious degeneration that had thrown this profession from the high pedestal of sanctity to the dust⁷⁷.

BASAVIS IN KURNOOL DISTRICT

As noticed earlier, the Basavis differ from the sānis or dēvadāsis dedicated to temples in the sense that they are not dancing girls and their duties in the temples are confined to the shrine of their dedication and are nominal. According to the survey conducted by the Social Welfare Department of A.P. there are as many as 15,850 Basavis mainly in the Rayalaseema and the Telangana regions of A.P. The Basavis in Telangana region are known by different names such as Jōgins, Pārvathis and Mātangis. Telangana region records a huge percentage (92.8%) of the total number of identified Basavis. While Karimnagar records the highest number of Basavis to the tune of 9,964 (62.82%), Ranga Reddy district records the lowest number of Basavis, that is, 50 (0.3%). With regard to the Basavi population Karimnagar is followed by Mahabubnagar, Nizamabad, Warangal, Anantapur, Kurnool, Hyderabad, Medak, Adilabad, Chittoor, Nellore, and Ranga Reddy districts.

77. Ramachandra Murthy, S.S: Sānis in Medieval Andhra Temples, in, Dr. G.S.Gai felicitation volume (In press).

In Kurnool district, the survey hitherto conducted reveals that there are at least 600 Basavis in Adoni, Holegunda, Alur, Chippagiri, Kauthalam and Halaharvi revenue Mandals. An intensive study followed by field work and administration of 250 schedules* in Kurnool district reveals that most of the Basavis (80%) belong to Mādiga, a Scheduled caste, and the remaining belong to Māla (17.6%), Dombara (1.6%), Bōya (0.4%) and Dāsari (0.4%) communities. Among these backward-socially and economically-castes it is customary (Table 1) to dedicate a daughter as Basavi to

TABLE 1

Frequency Distribution of Reasons for the Dedication of Girls to Various Deities

Sl. No.	Reasons for Dedication	No. of Basavis	%
1	Only female child/ren	158	(63.2%)
2	Parents'/Siblings' illhealth	6	(2.4%)
3	Custom of the family	7	(2.8%)
4	Financial constraints to contract a lawful marriage	7	(2.8%)
5	Childhood disease	27	(10.8%)
6	Oath to have male issues	4	(1.6%)
7	Oath to have children	1	(0.4%)
8	Continuous deaths of children	5	(2.0%)
9	Handicappedness	2	(0.8%)
10	Inability of sons to look after parents	7	(2.8%)
11	Tender age of children	25	(10.0%)
12	Superstition	1	(0.4%)
Total		250	(100.0%)

*Please see the Appendix for the format of schedule

perpetuate the patrilinear line, when there is no male heir in the family (63.2%). It is also common for some parents of the said castes to dedicate their daughters in pursuance of some vow taken at the time of family distress or calamity or serious illness to obtain relief or cure for themselves (2.4%) or their children (10.8%). At times, parents desiring male issues (1.6%) or children of any gender (0.4%) promise a daughter to the familial or village deity. Those (2.8%) who are unable to spare money required for the daughter's betrothal and marriage too take help of the custom. Similarly, the said factors also compelled the grand-mothers and mothers of the Basavis under study to practise the custom. For instance, (Table 2) in the case of 24 Basavis (9.6%) their

TABLE 2

Frequency Distribution of Basavis in Accordance with Generation

Sl. No.	Generation	No. of Basavis	%
1	Grand-mother's generation	24	9.6%
2	Mother's generation	36	14.2%
3	Both generations	17	6.8%
4	Ego's generation	173	69.2%
	Total	250	100.0%

grand-mothers were Basavis; similarly in the case of 36 Basavis (14.2%) their mothers led the life of Basavis, and in the case of 17 Basavis (6.8%) both grand-mothers and mothers remained as Basavis.

The Basavis under study belong to all age groups (Table 3). However, majority (14.4%) are in the age group of

TABLE 3
Frequency Distribution of Basavis in Accordance with the Age

Frequency of age	No. of <u>Basavis</u>	%
15 - 20	11	(4.4%)
21 - 25	36	(14.4%)
26 - 30	35	(14.0%)
31 - 35	22	(8.8%)
36 - 40	21	(8.4%)
41 - 45	33	(13.2%)
46 - 50	23	(9.2%)
51 - 55	15	(6.0%)
56 - 60	20	(8.0%)
61 - 65	24	(9.6%)
66 - 70	10	(4.0%)
Total	250	(100.0%)

21-25 followed by the age group of 26-30 (14%). It is disheartening to note that there are a few (4.4%) young Basavis in the age group of 15-20. This substantiates the fact that these young Basavis must have been initiated into Basavihood a decade ago. Further, almost all Basavis are uneducated. However, some of them could educate their children to some extent. There are 29 Basavi children who are undergoing primary education; 14 have received upper primary education; 18 students are studying in High School; 7 students have studied/been studying upto intermediate course and there are two graduates. The education of girls is almost neglected.

The rite of dedication (Table 4) includes the wedding of the girl at a tender age of eight or ten to the image of one's familial god or goddess such as Vrukunda Eranna, Anjaneya, Lord Venkateswara, Mallayya, Muniswamy, Rangaswamy, Ellamma, Uligamma, Maremma, Tikka Lakshamma, Kolhapuramma, Mahalakshmi, Durgamma, Tayamma etc. Table 4 reveals that 56 (22.4%) Basavis have been dedicated to Anjaneya followed by Vrukunda Eranna (14.8%), Mallaiiah (4.8%), Lord Venkateswara (2.8%) etc. Among the female deities Ellamma and Uligamma are the most favoured deities to whom 43 (17.2%) and 40 (16%)

TABLE 4

Frequency Distribution of Basavis Dedicated to Various Deities

Deities	No. of Basavis dedicated	%
<u>Male Deities</u>		
Vrukunda Eranna	37	(14.8%)
Anjaneya	56	(22.4%)
Mallaiah	12	(4.8%)
Muniswamy	2	(0.8%)
Rangaswamy	3	(1.2%)
Venkateswara	7	(2.8%)
Basappa	1	(0.4%)
Timmappa	2	(0.8%)
Penna Obulesu	1	(0.4%)
Narasappa	2	(0.8%)
Arkantaiah	1	(0.4%)
<u>Female Deities</u>		
Mahalakshmi	2	(0.8%)
Ellamma	43	(17.2%)
Tikka Lakshamma	17	(6.8%)
Uligamma	40	(16.0%)
Maremma	12	(4.8%)
Kolhapuramma	4	(1.6%)
Ramulamma	1	(0.4%)
Sunkalamma	1	(0.4%)
Durgamma	4	(1.6%)
Tayamma	2	(0.8%)
Total	250	(100.0%)

girls have been dedicated respectively. Other deities such as Tikka Lakshamma (6.8%), Maremma (4.8%), Kolhapuramma (1.6%), Durgamma (1.6%) etc., also find a place for dedicating girls. In Kurnool district, the initiation rites are conducted for declaring girls as Basavis, but differ to some extent, from those in vogue in Karnataka. Unlike in Karnataka, in Kurnool district the girls are not married to some inanimate object like a dagger, a sword or a drum and bells personifying the bridegroom. Moreover, the ceremony of dedication differs greatly in its details in different temples and even in the case of male and female deities.

The initiation rites correspond to the Hindu marriage ceremony. If dedicated in a goddess temple, the ceremony is expensive. The initiation ceremony commences with a procession of relatives, friends and neighbours to the shrine of familial deity and the prospective Basavi takes bath and is applied turmeric. She removes her routine dress and wraps her nude body with a neem leaves' wear. Holding neem leaves in her hand, she takes a circumambulation around the temple and offers a brief worship to the goddess. She sits in front of the deity and a necklace of black or white beads and golden tali with the embossed feet of the deity is tied around her

neck by the maternal uncle or Bayannāyana (the caste priest of Māligas) or Dāsari (the caste priest of Mālas) or Goravaiah etc. Table 5 reveals that in the case of 88 Basavis (35.2%)

TABLE 5

Frequency Distribution of Priests at the Initiation Ceremony

Sl. No.	Priest	No. of Basavis initiated	(%)
1	Maternal uncle	42	(16.8%)
2	Bayannayana	88	(35.2%)
3	Dasari	75	(34.0%)
4	Goravaiah	12	(4.8%)
5	Senior Basavi	15	(6.0%)
6	Brahmin Priest	3	(1.2%)
7	Grandfather	1	(0.4%)
8	Jangamaiah	1	(0.4%)
9	Mathangi	3	(1.2%)
Total		250	(100.0%)

out of 250, Bayannāyana functioned as the officiating priest of the ceremony. In the case of others, maternal uncle (16.8%) Dasari (34%), Goravaiah (4.8%) senior Basavi (6%) etc., functioned as priests at the initiating ceremony. The Priest

is given a gift and the ceremony comes to an end with a non-vegetarian feast for which a goat or ram is sacrificed to the deity concerned. From then onwards she can lead the life of a Basavi by remaining as a concubine with any paramour who enjoys an equal or superior caste status. Moreover, the Basavi has to pay a visit to the shrine of the village temple to whom she is dedicated once in a year and has to take part in the Jātara (fair) of the deity and offers worship. It is also to be noted that some Basavi women also undergo re-initiation ceremony to fulfil a vow taken to avert a calamity or prior to the celebration of marriage for her son. At the time of re-initiation ceremony she has to remove her routine dress and take circumambulation by wearing a neem leaves' dress around her naked body. Moreover, she has to arrange a non-vegetarian feast to the assembled.

On the other hand, the dedication rite at the shrine of male deities is not expensive and no animal is sacrificed to the deity. Instead, a sweet dish with three or five measures of rice is to be served to the accompanied. The prospective Basavi wears white dress and is decorated like a bride, rangavallis are drawn in front of the idol and the bride sits over them and the tali is tied by the priest or maternal uncle. However, in the recent past, it is said that a few Basavi initiations occurred at their respective homes.

Further, the initiation rite to those Basavis dedicated to God Mallaiah slightly differs. The tāli is tied by the Goravaiah (the devotee of Lord Siva). These Basavis visit the main temple near Alur during the Jātara of God Mallaiah. The Goravaiahs dance round the temple by placing the Basavis over their shoulders across their heads, as they regard the former as the wives of Lord Siva.

The details of worship also differ depending upon the deity of dedication. Those who are dedicated at the shrines of Mallaiah or Vrukunda Eranna offer worship on Mondays. Similarly, to those Basavis who are dedicated to Anjaneya, Ranga Swamy and Lord Venkateswara, Saturday is the auspicious day for offering worship. On the contrary, those dedicated to female deities offer worship on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Further, Basavis are required to go for alms on Tuesdays and Fridays. In addition, all the Basavis irrespective of their dedicated deities go for the collection of alms from five households during the celebration of Sankranti festival and the collected alms is shared with the needy. However, nowadays some Basavis, who are somewhat economically forward, go for begging alms from three or five houses to keep up the

tradition. A few others do not follow the tradition and collect alms from innumerable houses and for the aged Basavis begging is a means of livelihood and they do not share the alms with anybody.

A dedicated girl permanently stays in her parental home and practises marital relations with a person of equal or higher caste. The Basavis do not usually live on flesh trade promiscuously on hire. A Basavi often lives in concubinage with one man, as sexual unions sanctioned by wedlock are especially repugnant ones in the service of the deity. A few Basavis under study (20%) live with their maternal uncles as concubines. 82 Basavis (32.8%) out of 250 live with the paramours of same caste. A good number of them (37.6%) have chosen paramours belonging to castes other than their own such as Bōya, Uppara, Reddy, Vadde, Kurava, Pinjāri, Sāle, Vālmīki etc. It is noticed that concubinage with other than one's own maternal uncle is usually short-lived. Most of the Basavis have been deserted by their paramours after the birth of 2 or 3 children, leaving the offspring and the mother to their destiny and at present there are 24 Basavis (9.6%) without any paramour in the area under study. Moreover, there are instances (18.4%) of deserting more than one paramour and three women (1.2%) lived with more than two paramours. A

Basavi who lives as a concubine gets a weekly or monthly sum towards her livelihood. She is not, however, despised in the society. "No stigma attaches to the Basavis or their children and they are received on terms of equality by other members of their caste"⁷⁸. The children of a Basavi enjoy legitimacy and in fact, Basavis themselves are outwardly indistinguishable from married women of their own community.

Furthermore, a Basavi is believed to be immune from widowhood and is called akhaṇḍasaubhāgyavati. Since she is wedded to a divine deity, she is the most welcome guest at weddings and is regarded as bearer of fortune. At weddings people would like to get a string of the tāli prepared by her and she threads on it a few beads from her own necklace. However, nowadays the people have almost stopped practising this cultural trait, especially in and around urban areas.

The institution of Basavi endows masculine privileges to the dedicated girls. Contrary to all Hindu law, a Basavi is entitled to inherit her parents' property and perform their funeral rites as if she were a son; her children belong to the lineage of their mother and not to the lineage of their biological father; if she has a son, he inherits her property and perpetuates her father's family. If she has only daughter/s then a daughter is again initiated into Basavihood.

78. E. Thurston : Op. cit., p. 133

Several factors are responsible for the perpetuation of the institution of Basavi system. Firstly, the system proves to be a pointer to the family strategy whereby a family with its patrilineal ideology uses its women to perpetuate itself or under economic hardships depends on earnings derived by them or gains punya (merit) by dedicating them to deities. In the specific circumstances wherein the only/all issue/s in the patrilineal family is/are a daughter/s, the family could become extinct if she or they marry. Hence, the provision of the institution of Basavi entitles the parents to control and utilize her sexuality for their own maintenance and use her reproductive power to continue the patrilineal lineage. Hence, the Basavi is endowed with masculine privileges which she enjoys by inheriting the parental property and shoulders responsibilities as if she were a son. She performs the obsequies of the parents in the place of the son, thus enabling her parents to die in peace. She looks after her parental family by spending the income derived from her concubinage or the earnings in the form of wages received towards labour; she looks after the parents in their old age. If she has a son he inherits not only her mother's property but also perpetuates her father's family. If she too has only a daughter, then again, that daughter is dedicated as a Basavi.

For purposes of marriage, issues of a Basavi are as eligible as those of the women normally married.

Secondly, the institution of Basavi seems to be a by-product of the cultural strategy adopted by the society. The cultural values do not exist in vacuum and they have an economic basis too. The Basavis, who mostly come from lower depressed castes, are agricultural labourers and their patrons hail from higher castes or economically superior classes. It is also common for a caste Hindu, who likes a good-looking girl, goad or compel her parents to dedicate her as a Basavi, bear the expenditure of her dedication and maintain a temporary or permanent liaison with the girl. In addition, the extra-marital relations with the Basavis are viewed as status parameters. On the otherhand, for the lower caste families this custom serves as a means of establishing links and enhancing their own status with the upper castes, as the caste rules stipulate the Basavis to mate with men of higher castes and forbid them to consort with lower castes. Though the sex-partners of the Basavis are not their husbands they do influence the status of a Basavi and her family vis-a-vis others in the community and the custom makes a provision to the use of women as instruments of vertical social mobility by their own families⁷⁹.

79. Prabha Mahale : op. cit., p. 129

Thirdly, the age old beliefs, legends and myths play a pivotal role in perpetuating the system. When a poor family belonging to a lower caste suffers from natural calamity or a child suffers from skin disease or stomach ache etc., it is attributed to the wrath of familial or village goddess and a fear of retribution is instilled if the deity is not appeased through the initiation of a girl into Basavihood.

It is disheartening to note that the socio-economic life of the Basavis under study is miserable. They eke out their livelihood by depending upon a multitude of occupations (Table 6). For 130 Basavis (52%) casual or agricultural labour is the principal source of income ranging from Rs. 5/- to Rs.10/-; 84 Basavi women (33.6%) go to cotton-ginning factory to earn

TABLE 6

Occupational Structure of the Basavis under Study

Sl. No.	Name of the occupation	No. of Basavis	(%)
1	Casual or agricultural labour	130	52%
2	Working in a cotton-ginning factory	84	33.6%
3	Maid servant	4	1.6%
4	Begging	6	2.4%
5	Firewood-selling	6	2.4%
6	Casual labour + begging	18	7.2%
7	Petty business	2	0.8%
Total		250	100.0%

a daily wage of Rs.15/-. However, factory work is seasonal and lasts for a maximum period of six months. Four Basavis (1.6%) work as servant maids and earn a monthly wage ranging from Rs.150 to Rs. 200/-. Begging and firewood-selling are primary occupations for six (2.4%) Basavis respectively and they earn Rs.6/- per day; 18 Basavis (7.2%) depend on casual labour and begging for their livelihood. Two Basavis (0.4%) are petty traders running a small provisions store and a flour-mill respectively. It is also said that a few Basavis prostitute themselves to supplement their income. Furthermore, the benefactors of most of the Basavis are not rich enough to maintain concubines. A large number of paramours (75.2%) are wage-labourers; 16 (6.4%) depend on various odd occupations such as tailoring, driving, clerical work, teaching etc; 10 paramours (4%) are petty businessmen and 12 (4.8%) are agriculturists.

The Basavi system has become degenerated and the Basavis incourse of time have become down-trodden. Almost all Basavis feel unhappy with their present life which is shrouded in poverty, illiteracy, low standard of living and misery. The financial position of most of the Basavis is not sound. Most of them are landless. However, 18 Basavis (7.2%) possess dry land ranging from one acre to six acres. Similarly, 58 Basavis

(23.2%) do not have houses; however, 136 Basavis (54.4%) have their own thatched huts and 56 (22.4%) live in the Government constructed pucca buildings. With regard to social awareness almost all Basavis are not exposed to the outer world and only 51.2% of the Basavis under study know about the legal ban of Basavi system. However, all the Basavis are determined to put an end to the age-old tradition and improve their socio-economic status by educating their children and by making use of welfare measures undertaken by the Government and voluntary agencies.

CHAPTER V

WELFARE MEASURES FOR THE REHABILITATION OF BASAVIS

With the passage of time, the system of Basavi got degenerated and the socio-economic life of the Basavis is highly deplorable and miserable. Hence, efforts by the Government of Andhra Pradesh as well as some voluntary organisations are being made for the emancipation of Basavis from age-old shackles by raising their socio-economic status as part of the plans made for the welfare of all beings. From the psychological point of view these welfare programmes are aimed at generating among the Basavis a new urge and an inspiration for better living, a desire to improve their material conditions, and to have a more constructive outlook towards their future development.

THE PROGRAMMES

Legal Measures:

As in Karnataka State, in Andhra Pradesh too, the Government has enacted an Act in 1988 prohibiting the practice of Basavi/Jōgini system. According to the Act, a person who encourages the perpetuation of the said custom or participates

in the ritual concerned has to undergo an imprisonment for a minimum period of two years and to pay a fine of Rs. 3000/- to Rs. 5000/-. As a welfare measure a person marrying a daughter of Basavi/Dēvadāsi is awarded Rs.1000/- as an incentive by the Social Welfare Department. However, not a single case of default is recorded and there is no vigorous implementation of the legal provisions protecting the dignity of women. Despite official claims to the contrary the system often continues undeterred, atleast in secrecy. It is reported that every year atleast 200 young innocent girls voluntarily or forcibly accept Jogatihood. The occurrence of a few theogamous marriages in the Balkampet area of Hyderabad itself in the month of April, 1990 is a standing example of the said fact¹.

SPONSORED PROGRAMMES

After India became Independent, the Basavis, like any backward class of people, are subjected to greater interference in their life because of sponsored changes atleast from 1986-87 onwards. Apart from declaring the Basavi custom as illegal, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has launched several welfare schemes such as vocational training

1 Andhra Jyoti (A Telugu Daily News Paper) dated 9-4-90.

skill development, self-employment and income generation, animal husbandry, allotment of house-sites, construction of pucca buildings etc. (Tables 7, 8 & 9).

For a critical evaluation of different schemes implemented in Kurnool district under various sectors some more details are furnished in matters related to various sectors or schemes.

PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTED IN ADONI MANDAL, KURNOOL DISTRICT

1 Tailoring:

In rural areas, the employment opportunities especially for women are scanty. Imparting specific skills enables them to have access to employment and income generation. In this connection, the Kurnool district authorities have established training-cum-production units in tailoring, soap-making, chalk piece-making, matchstick-making, book-binding and spinning. In order to improve the economic status of the Basavis of Adoni town, a garment-making centre with necessary infrastructure facilities was established under DRDA in 1986. Training was imparted to 25 Basavis in tailoring for a period of 12 months. The trainees were paid Rs. 50/- each per month

TABLE 7

Welfare programmes implemented for the Benefit of Basavis of Adoni Town, Kurnool District

S.No	Programmes	Sponsoring Agency	Period of Training	Stipend per month	No. of Beneficiaries	Year of implementation	Other Details
1	Tailoring	DRDA	12 Months	Rs.50/-	25	1985-86	-
2	Tailoring	Social Welfare Department	6 Months	Rs.120/-	13	1987-88	Trainees were given sewing machines free of cost.
2	Soap-making	DRDA	6 Months	Rs.120/-	10	1986-87	-
3	Chalk-piece making	DRDA	6 Months	Rs.120/-	10	1986-87	-
4	Matchstick-making	DRDA	6 Months	Rs.120/-	10	1986-87	-
5	Book-binding	DRDA	6 Months	Rs.120/-	10	1986-87	-
6	Spinning	DRDA	6 Months	Rs.120/-	30	1986-87	-

towards stipend. On completion of the training, 15 out of 25 trainees were provided employment in the production centre. They were able to earn Rs. 14/- to 15/- per day by stitching clothes which were supplied to the Departments of Social Welfare, Tribal Welfare, S.C and S.T Corporation etc. Similarly, during 1987-88 another batch of 20 Basavis underwent training in the said skill. But seven of them dropped out in the middle of the training. The district Social Welfare Department paid each trainee a sum of Rs.120/- towards stipend for a period of six months. After training, they were assisted by the said department to start their own independent units by supplying sewing machines free of cost. Thus, it can be said that this welfare scheme has been enthusiastically received by most of the beneficiaries.

2 Soap-making:

In 1986, a training-cum-production centre was started under DRDA to impart training in detergent soap-making. A batch of 10 trainees was imparted necessary skill by paying a stipend Rs. 120/- each per month for a period of six months. Immediately after the completion of training, production of soap commenced. But the production unit could attract only three employees due to the meagre payment of wages at the

rate of Rs.8/- per day. Moreover, the centre could not be run properly for want of proper management, non-supply of raw material, sub-standard machinery, insufficient allotment of budget, rejection of soaps by the welfare hostels on the ground of lack of quality of the product etc. However, the district authorities concerned took a decision in the month of August, 1990 to resume the production of soaps and to overcome all the constraints in the sale of the product.

3 Chalkpiece-making:

In 1986, another welfare measure viz., Training-cum-Production unit in chalkpiece-making was taken up by the district authorities under DRDA. A batch of 10 beneficiaries underwent training in the said skill. Each trainee received a sum of Rs. 120/- towards stipend for a period of six months. The production unit continued to function upto March, 1990 only by providing employment to 14 beneficiaries who used to get a daily wage of Rs. 10/- to Rs. 14/- each. Recently it has been decided at the District Collector's meeting with other officials concerned to resume the work of chalkpiece-making and to supply the same to all schools in the district.

4 Matchstick-making:

This welfare measure of imparting vocational training for a batch of 10 beneficiaries was taken up in 1986 under DRDA. Each trainee was paid an amount of Rs. 120/- towards stipend for a period of six months. But the production unit started functioning from 1989 providing employment to 10 trainees only and the unit was ultimately closed by the end of March 1990 because of several reasons such as lack of sufficient marketability for the product, severe competition from the local units, substandard quality of the match-sticks, payment of meagre daily wages at the rate of Rs.5 or Rs.6/- etc. However, in the month of August, 1990 the District Collector took a decision after holding a dialogue with the officials concerned to resume the work of match-making by overcoming all the constraints.

5 Book-binding:

The task of running a training-cum-production unit in book-binding was taken up by the authorities concerned in 1986 under DRDA. As a result, a batch of 10 young male children of Basavis received training in the said vocational skill.

The trainees were paid a sum of Rs. 120/- each during the 6-month period of training by way of stipend. The production unit, which started functioning from 1988 only, was closed by the turn of 1990. The production unit could not attract more than 10 trainees to work because of several obstacles such as meagre payment of daily wages at the rate of Rs. 5/- or Rs. 6/-, non-supply of paper by the State Trading Corporation at subsidised price etc. However, the district authorities concerned are planning to resume the functioning of the said production unit shortly.

6 Spinning:

This scheme was undertaken in 1986 by the district authorities under DRDA. The training-cum-production unit in spinning provided employment only to four out of 30 total trainees who received a stipend of Rs. 120/- each during the period of 6-month training. Moreover, the production unit also ceased to function four months after commencement because of two main reasons such as hard nature of the work and payment of unremunerative wages to the employees at the rate of Rs.3/- or Rs. 4/- per day.

PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTED IN ALUR MANDAL OF KURNOOL DISTRICT

In order to improve the economic status of the poor Basavis, the district administrative authorities have undertaken not only skill training for employment but also animal husbandry programme for creating self-employment. The following are the programmes implemented in Alur Mandal of Kurnool District (Table 8).

1 Distribution of Sheep Units:

Under animal husbandry sector the district authorities have distributed sheep units (4 sheep and 1 ram) to a maximum number of 102 Basavi families belonging to different villages of Alur Mandal. All the beneficiaries have enthusiastically received the sheep units in various spells from 21-11-88 to 6-12-89 with a view to supplementing income. In the first two spells of delivery 27 beneficiaries and 8 beneficiaries belonging to Alur, the Mandal headquarters village received sheep units on 21-10-88 and 29-10-88 respectively. The S.C Corporation made arrangements for the payment of Rs.100/- for each beneficiary towards subsistence allowance from Nov., 1988 to Oct, 1989. Similarly in the next five spells of delivery 77 beneficiaries hailing from different villages of Alur

TABLE 8

Welfare Programmes implemented for the Rehabilitation of Basavis of Alur Mandal, Kurnool District

Sl. No.	Programme	Dept. of Animal Husbandry, Social Welfare Department and S.C. Corporation	Number of Beneficiaries	Year of implementation	Other Details
1	Distribution of sheep units under Basavi Rehabilitation programme		27	21-10-88	--All the beneficiaries belong to Alur, the Mandal headquarters.
-do-		-do-	8	29-10-88	--S.C Corporation arranged for the payment of Rs.100/- for each beneficiary towards subsistence allowance from Nov. 1988 to Oct. 89.
-do-		-do-	77	6-10-89 to 6-12-89	--The beneficiaries belong to various villages of Alur Mandal.
					--27 out of 77 beneficiaries were given a subsistence allowance of Rs.150/- from 2-11-89 to April, 1990.
2	Sanctioning of House-site Pattās	Revenue Dept.	32	1990	--Each beneficiary belonging to Alur was given a house-site measuring 3 cents.
					--The project of construction of houses for the Basavis is under consideration

Mandal received sheep units from 6-10-89 to 6-12-89. But only 27 out of 77 total beneficiaries were sanctioned an enhanced subsistence allowance of Rs.150/- from 2-11-89 to April, 1990. Moreover, steps were taken to insure the sheep units and to provide health check-up by the veterinary doctor.

Furthermore, under housing scheme Mandal Revenue authorities of Alur have sanctioned house-site pattās, each measuring 3 cents, to 32 beneficiaries in 1990. The project of construction of houses for all the beneficiaries, who belong to Alur, is under consideration.

PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTED IN HOLEGUNDA MANDAL OF KURNOOL DISTRICT

The following are the programmes implemented for the rehabilitation of Basavi families of Hologunda Mandal of Kurnool district (Table 9).

1 Distribution of Milch Animals

In 1988, the district authorities undertook the programme of distribution of milch animals (one Jersey cow to each beneficiary) to 40 beneficiaries of Hologunda Mandal. Apart from extending a subsistence allowance of Rs.150/- per month to

TABLE 9

Welfare Programmes Implemented for the Benefit of Basavis of Hologunda Mandal, Kurnool District

Sl. No.	Name of the programme	Sponsoring Agency	Number of beneficiaries	Year of implementation	Other details
1	Distribution of Milch Animals (Cross-breed cows)	Social Welfare Dept. & Animal Husbandry Department.	40	1988	Each beneficiary was given a Jersey cow.
2	Construction of Pucca Houses	Social Welfare Department.	35	1988	The beneficiary is allowed to construct her own house without contractor.
3	Allotment of Surplus Cultivable Land	Revenue Dept.	10	1988	Each beneficiary was allotted 2 acres of dry land
4	Distribution of Dhoti or Saree	Social Welfare Dept.	128	1988	--
5	Sanctioning of pension to the Aged	"	8	1988	--

each beneficiary for a period of six months, steps were also taken to provide feeding material to each cow at the cost of Rs.200/- per month for a period of six months. Similarly, an amount of Rs. 250/- each for the construction of 32 cattle sheds was sanctioned for the benefit of cattle. Furthermore, efforts were made to insure all the cows and to provide health check-up frequently by the veterinary doctor. In case of the death of cattle, new ones are replaced for the benefit of beneficiaries.

2 Housing Scheme:

Under housing scheme, the authorities concerned undertook the programme of constructing a complex of pucca houses benefitting 35 beneficiaries at Hologunda in 1988. For the construction of each house, an amount of Rs. 8000/- was sanctioned. The speciality of the scheme was that the beneficiaries themselves were allowed to construct their respective houses without the interference of any building contractor.

3 Allotment of Surplus Cultivable Land:

In order to provide permanent assets, the programme of allotting two acres of surplus dry land each for 10 beneficiaries

was undertaken under agriculture development section in 1988. In this context, it is to be noted that the project of providing irrigation facilities is under consideration.

4 Distribution of Dhoti or Saree:

The District Social Welfare Department, Kurnool made arrangements in 1988 for the distribution of either dhoti or saree to as many as 128 beneficiaries of Hologunda Mandal. An amount of Rs. 31/- was sanctioned for each cloth, spending a total amount of Rs. 3,968/-.

5 Pension to the Aged Basavis:

The district authorities concerned arranged for the payment of Rs. 50/- each for the benefit of eight aged Basavis of the said Mandal who have been neglected by their kith and kin for various socio-economic reasons.

WELFARE PROGRAMMES IN THE TELANGANA REGION OF ANDHRA PRADESH

It is disheartening to note that much welfare work has not been undertaken in Telangana region of A.P. for the rehabilitation of Basavis/Jōgins who constitute 92.8% of identified

Basavis in the entire State. However, in a few districts like Warangal, Nizamabad etc., scanty efforts were made for the socio-economic advancement of the Basavis. For example, in Warangal district, 219 Basavis were identified. In 1988, the Department of Child and Women Welfare launched a scheme of imparting training in tailoring for a batch of 10 Basavis in the first spell. On successful completion of training in the said skill, the trainees were given sewing machines free of cost. Similarly, in the second spell, another batch of 10 Basavis who crossed 35 years of age were extended loans to open provision stores, to buy milch cattle, to open poultry units etc., with a view to providing self-employment to the beneficiaries. Further, they were taught basic functional skills in reading and writing through Adult Education Centres with the message of National Literacy Mission.

Moreover, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has recently proposed to start a rehabilitation centre either at Karimnagar or Adilabad where it is planned to train 100 Basavis every years in poultry, vocational courses etc.

An examination of various welfare measures undertaken by the district administration, thus, reveals that since the implementation of development programmes the Basavi women

could get an opportunity to expose themselves to outer world through various administrative personnel. The Government is also greatly encouraged by the beneficiaries themselves who are open to new ideas and schemes willing to adapt themselves to the changing patterns of life. Almost all schemes, except the scheme of spinning, have been enthusiastically received by the beneficiaries. Hence, in this context, it can be stated that any section of people accept innovations, provided the latter are personally rewarding and satisfying to that what they replace or supplement.

Further, it is disheartening to note that the Government has bothered about the upliftment of the Basavis only in 1980s after a lapse of four decades of Independence. Even the development programmes hitherto undertaken are also inadequate in view of the large number of Basavis, especially in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh. Hence, more number of programmes are to be undertaken on a massive scale with clear cut formulation and foresight. They should also be need-based and pragmatic.

Further, the beneficiaries who are engaged in various production units of Kurnool district complain about the irregular payment of wages. For instance, in the case of tailoring

unit wages are paid twice a year. Moreover, the trainees working in different units are totally dissatisfied with the meagre wages which are not at all remunerative. It is also alleged that most of the production units were to be closed mainly because of mismanagement and misappropriation of funds and lack of commitment and concern on the part of some administrative personnel. In addition, some of the schemes are inappropriate and are not well formulated with much care and foresight. Hence, there is a dire need for involving the prospective beneficiaries for holding a dialogue with them while formulating any proposed scheme.

ROLE OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC BETTERMENT OF THE BASAVIS

As stated earlier, most of the programmes initiated by the Government to alleviate the socio-economic problems of the Basavis have proved to be either inadequate for the task or inappropriate to generate the end results as desired. The benefits of a quite a few of the programmes have not percolated to the ultimate beneficiaries as planned, while many welfare programmes have turned to be distress relief programmes for the poor Basavis, rather than promoting self

reliance. More significantly, the human element in development has been often ignored.

As it is often accepted, it is not mere economic growth but the happiness of man and the realisation of his full potentials that ultimately matter in development. This requires a major social change. It is believed that the two important components of social change are human development and refinement of their circumstances through increased social and intellectual awareness.

It is in this context with a full understanding of the situation and realization of the facets of working with the people and development of human personality, the voluntary bodies set out their activities with some clear cut strategies and with an emotional response to the multifarious problems of the Basavis. Though most of them have emerged a few years ago, they have, indeed, demonstrated their deep concern for the people under study and active involvement in working with the people and they have today emerged as major factors to reckon within the field of Basavi emancipation.

Voluntary Bodies-Their Mission and Purpose:

In addition to the Government, a few voluntary organisations such as SALT (Social Awareness Through Learning and

Training), and its sister organisation JWPT (A Joint Women's Programme Team), Population and Environmental Education Centre, NISA (National Institute for Social Action), Samskar, Chelli Nilayam, Atheists' Association of Vizayawada, Arthika Samatha Mandali (Council of Economic Equality), most of which came into existence during the past five to eight years, have been making tireless pioneering efforts for the emancipation of the Basavis. In this context, it is to be noted that the above said bodies have confined themselves to certain districts only in extending their helping hand.

SALT, the head office of which is located in Hyderabad took initiative in bringing the miserable life of the Basavis of Kurnool district, especially those of Adoni town to light in collaboration with one of its sister organisations viz., JWPT which spearheads its activities from Delhi. Some active members of the latter organisation such as Miss J. Sarala, Miss J. Mary and G. Priskilla made a survey in 1983 under its Social Protection Scheme about the socio-economic position of the Basavis of Adoni town and submitted an unpublished report to the Government of Andhra Pradesh and district authorities concerned. A meeting was also convened at Adoni Town bringing several people-councillors, voluntary social workers, workers of Youth and Women Welfare Organisations, Government

officials, teaching staff of the local colleges to a common forum to discuss and evolve suitable strategies for the betterment of Basavi life.

Further, JWPT made efforts to start "Basavi Sankshema Samithi" (Forum for the Welfare of the Basavis) which evolved plans for the eradication of this evil practice. On receiving a memorandum from the Samithi, the then Collector of Kurnool district took initiative for the construction of pucca houses for the Basavis and for the launching of similar welfare programmes. The said organisation was also successful in arranging marriages in 1986 for five Basavi women and in getting sanctioned an incentive award of Rs.1000/- for each newly married couple. Miss J.Sarala, apart from taking part in the said survey, took painstaking steps to run a Balwadi at Indira Nagar of Adoni town with a view to inculcate school going habits among the young children apart from stimulating their cognitive faculties. There were as many as 75 children attending the school. The students of NSS of Adoni town donated black board to the School and a house site was provided by the residents of Indira Nagar to construct a building for the school. Moreover, she arranged several meetings at different residential localities of Adoni town, with a view to bringing about an awareness among the Basavis in particular and the

public in general about the plight of the former and the evil consequences of the age-old practice. Likewise, G.Preskilla, another social worker associating herself with J.W.P.T extended her helping hand in the rehabilitation work of Basavis. She brought to the notice of District Collector, Kurnool and officials concerned that most of the welfare schemes launched by the government have ceased to function giving reasons and suggesting several suitable remedial steps.

Another voluntary organisation viz., Population and Environmental Education Centre has launched its activities in 1988 from Velgodu, Kurnool district. It started a Tailoring-cum-Dress-making Centre, funded by the people of Netherlands, at Adoni to impart specific skills to the Basavis so that the latter can have access to employment and income generation. As a result, 15 Basavi women underwent training in the said centre for a period of ten months getting an amount of Rs.200/- per month towards stipend. The organisation also planned to start a production centre for the trained women with an initial capital of Rs. 35,000/-. As a step in this direction, cloth and other required materials were supplied to the successful trainees. However, the centre soon ceased to function because of various reasons such as lack of marketability for the stitched clothes, stoppage or delay in the release of funds etc.

Furthermore, the said voluntary body also involved in carrying the message of National Literacy Mission through adult literacy programme. The adult education programme had its humble beginning with 7 members at Adoni in 1988. Consequently, the adult Basavis in the age group of 15-35 years were imparted functional literacy skills.

With regard to the voluntary services extended for the socio-economic advancement of the Basavis or Jōgins in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh, some voluntary bodies such as NISA, Samskar, Chelli Nilayam, Atheists' Association, Arthika Samatha Mandali have launched same pioneering programmes. In February, 1987, the voluntary organisations, especially NISA and Samskar have organised a conference in Delhi on the Welfare of Basavis. Several eminent personalities like Smt. Kumudben Joshi (the Ex-Governor of A.P. and Chairman of NISA), Dr. Sarmamarla of West Germany, Smt. and Sri Lavanam (eminent social workers) etc., and a few Basavis attended the conference as delegates. Likewise, in order to eradicate the evil practice of Basavi custom, the members of Chelli Nilayam and Samskar organised a meeting at Varni of Nizamabad district in which officials concerned, non-officials, villagers and 200 Basavis took part. In addition, the then Governor of A.P Smt. Kumudben Joshi, Smt. Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, the Central

Minister for Social Welfare, Ajayendra Pal, the then Collector of Nizamabad district, and sub-collector of Bodhan also participated in the said meeting.

Furthermore, in December, 1985 the members of Atheists' Association of Vizayawada and Samskar such as Smt. Hemalatha Lavanam, V.V.Prasada Rao, Smt. Nirmala Rao and Marni Ramakrishna Rao have made efforts to collect census of the Basavis or Jogins in Nizamabad district for the first time.

The voluntary organisations have brought about, to some extent, an awareness about the social and legal consequences of the Basavi custom by means of several techniques of propaganda such as enactment of playlets like "Sayanēshu Rambha", "Jōgu Jāthara" and dance programmes. Whenever the members of these voluntary organisations happen to know about the possible occurrence of Basavi marriages with family or local gods and goddesses, they tried to convince the parents by explaining the consequences. They have also stopped several such marriages by bringing the police to the place of occurrence of theogamous marriages. Further, the voluntary bodies themselves arranged a few marriages of Basavis with young men of modern outlook. For instance, in 1986, the then Governor of A.P. arranged two marriages for Basavis in the Raj Bhavan

itself with the help of another voluntary organisation viz., Chelli Nilayam. Similarly, in April, 1987 with the help of the latter organisation, the eminent social worker Smt. Hemalatha Lavanam arranged marriages for the Basavis in accordance with the Special Marriage Act. In 1988, in Krishna District of A.P. also the Arthika Samatha Mandali arranged a marriage of Basavi with a man of progressive outlook. Likewise under the auspices of Samskar the said former organisation has organised meetings of awareness for the Basavis.

Furthermore, the present Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Sri Krishnakanth and his wife, Smt. Suman Krishnakanth took initiative for the upliftment of Basavis and to bring them into the mainstream of national life. They participated in a review meeting of rehabilitative measures for the socio-economic advancement of Basavis that took place in the Raj Bhavan on 8-4-90 organised under the auspices of Mahila Dakshata Samithi and S.A.L.T. Both of them along with others such as the Director of Social Welfare Department, female social workers of various voluntary agencies, a number of Jōgins etc., watched a vedio film covering the ritual aspects of Jōgini marriage and had personal interviews with a few jogins. They promised that ameliorative, welfare measures would be soon intensified for the upliftment of the Basavis and expedite the matters by holding a meeting with the officers concerned.

As said earlier, since the relief measures provided by the Government are often inadequate for the aged Basavis, the voluntary bodies have taken some steps to supplement the Government efforts by providing the missing links. In order to provide some economic assistance to the aged Basavis, who have been neglected by their kith and kin for various socio-economic reasons, the Samskar has arranged for the payment of old age pensions under its Care of the Aged Programme funded by the Helpage India. Similarly, in May, 88 Chelli Nilayam took up a programme of providing economic and health assistance for the aged Basavis for about a year. Some doctors like Mr. Rama Mohan Rao, Jaine Nehru of Nizamabad have arranged health camps and eye camps in order to improve the health status of the Basavis.

Impact of Welfare Programmes:

The welfare measures launched by the Government of A.P as well as some voluntary organisations could induce some impact on the lives of Basavis, though the programmes were often meagre and inappropriate. The study reveals that the Basavis, especially the present generation of Basavis are not unduly tradition-bound and are empathetic to induced change. Most of the Basavis could realize, to a greater extent, the social and legal consequences of the perpetuation of the evil practice.

They are prepared to marry any one who wholeheartedly comes forward to become a life-mate. A good number of them have also strongly determined to put an end to the age-old practice within this generation. In addition, they are readily willing to make use of any suitable welfare measure which the Government or voluntary organisation launches.

Suggestions for the Speedy and Effective Rehabilitation of the Basavis:

It is an established fact that optimal development of human resources can be achieved through a process of empowering the socio-economically vulnerable sections of population. Hence, the strategy of Government as well as voluntary bodies is to be based on the fact that socio-political change particularly educational change is a weapon by which human beings can ultimately transform their environment through a process of conscientisation. It is believed that this process actuates the people to enter into a dialogue to achieve a deepening awareness both of social and cultural realities that shaped their lives and of their ability to transform that reality. The major barriers for such a transformation is powerlessness of the poor. Hence, empowering the poor Basavis through an integrated approach should be the strategy for any promoter

of induced change-Government or voluntary bodies. The strategy involves a frontal attack simultaneously from four angles. They are (1) education and skill formation (2) health, medical relief and child care (3) relief, rehabilitation and community infrastructure and (4) assets creation, employment and income generation. In this context, a few suggestions may be putforth with regard to the speedy and effective rehabilitation of the Basavis. They are: 1. The Government may undertake the task of implementing the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) programme by covering a network of services that would benefit more number of Basavi women and their children. The service should include immunisation, health check-up, supplementary nutrition, health education, non-formal, pre-school education for the children in the age group of 3-6 years and pre-natal and post-natal care for mothers. In addition to these package of services, non-formal education for school drop-out children, adult education for adults in functional literacy, training and assistance to ICDS mothers for income generating schemes, maternal and child health care centres are to be provided as extra-components under the said programme.

2 Apart from the existing schemes of welfare, new schemes such as imparting job-oriented training in various vocational

skills like embroidery, carpentry, electrical motor winding, house-hold wiring, bakery, type-writing, toy-making, T.V and radio assembling, biscuit-making, poultry, garment-making, dairy etc., for the Basavi children, especially for those who have completed schooling upto X standard as well as drop-outs. are to be taken up. On completion of the training in the chosen vocational skill, the trainees may be assisted to start their own independent units or provided employment in the production units of the said vocations.

3 A band of devoted social workers with a missionary zeal and commitment and well-known voluntary agencies of macrolevel nature such as RASS, AWARE etc., are to come forward to take up various social, amelioratory and development programmes for the Basavis.

In conclusion, it may be said that legal and welfare measures alone are not sufficient to eradicate the practice and structural transformation is necessary and desirable for any change or improvement in the present condition of Basavis. Further, in our commitment to change, the needs of family at the household level are to be recognised as the central arena for intervention in the efforts towards combating the practice. With respect the Basavis, it is important to recognize that

in reality it is the family which is the basic social unit where family decisions and strategies are evolved to dedicate girls to various duties in compliance with cultural values and social structure of unequal and exploitative relationships of the community. Hence, to combat this barrier or obstacle, both the modern and the traditional folk media such as Veedhi Nātakam (street drama), Burra Katha (ballad), Thōlu Bommalāta (puppet show), Pagati vēshālu (day playlets), folk songs etc., are to be made use of to expose the consequences of the evil practice of Basavi system and to bring about a lot of difference by mobilizing the people in general to have more and more awareness.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The practice of employing women for the service of God has hoary antiquity and is known as dēvadāsi system which may be traced back to a period when organised societies and worship of the dead and also of God came into existence. Besides the service motive, there were also other reasons for such a system which ultimately became an institutionalized one. But almost always this was a system that was associated with the institution of temple. Several records in Kannada and Telugu speak of raṅga-maṇḍapas for providing music and dance for the performance of which temple girls known as sūles etc., were commissioned. Slowly these women folk entered an organized profession. They were provided with land, money and residential quarters.

During the 12th century when Virasaivism had its impact on society the temple as an institution lost its significance. Consequently, temples turned out to be Mathas and those women that were originally attached to the temples now took to prostitution. Since the halo of honour still presented itself, they came to be called themselves as the Basavis who, in the same way as the sūle did, dedicate themselves to folk deities.

The sūles themselves now came to be called as Basavis. But for better and more comfortable living slowly they came to be attached to some individuals also.

With regard to the origin of the dēvadāsi system in India there is no unanimous opinion among the scholars. On the basis of archaeological findings of the temple structure and the cult of Tantricism from the Indus Valley an approximate date is given to the origin of this system as 3000 B.C. But literary and epigraphical evidences prove that this system came into existence much later, but long before the 8th century A.D.

Further, dēvadāsi system has several parallels in various other cultures. Terms like Hierodouloi of ancient Babylonia, the 'concubines' of Zeus (Amman) of Egypt, the Lepo'dovroi of Corinth in Greece, the Kosio of Slave Coast of Africa, the Geishas of Japan, the a-nan of Combodia, the 'Vestal Virgins' of ancient Rome etc., undoubtedly support the prevalence of similar institutions in other parts of the world. Similarly, several theories have been put forward as to the origin of the institution of the dēvadāsi. Most of the explanations are quite insufficient for the whole institution of dēvadāsi. However, one of the explanations that the said system can be

attributed to the prevalence of fertility cults seems to be the most plausible one, although it does not account for everything.

Theogamy in India is known as dēvadāsi (dēvadāsa) custom which is known by different nomenclatures in different parts of the country on the basis of sacred and secular services they provide. The term Basavi is quite popularly used for dēvadāsi and the former is the feminine gender of Basava or Nandi - the bull of Siva and literally means a female breeding bull. There are many types Basavis such as Gudi-basavi, Jati-basavi, Barlagada-basavi, Ura-basavi, Garuda-gambada-basavi, Nandikola-basavi etc.,. Each of them has her own status and role to play. Their area of their movement is also clearly demarcated. The latest dimension of Basavi system in Karnataka is the engulfing of commercial prostitution which facilitates the Basavis, especially those of Scheduled Caste to become prostitutes providing sexual intercourse for men, not necessarily of their own or upper castes. Consequently, they do not enjoy the same high social esteem that they once had in the closed circle of a village. Hence, sporadic attempts have been made right from 1892 for the eradication of this social evil through legislative measures. The Government of Karnataka also started undertaking several welfare measures for the rehabilitation of Basavis from

mid-Eightees, However, the system continues undeterred, at least in secrecy.

The institution of dēvadāsi is prevalent in the nook and corner of the country, but is known differently in different regions exhibiting certain unique as well as common features. The dēvadāsis were known as Bhavins in Goa and Western India; as Muralis, Jōginies and Aradhinis etc., in Maharashtra; as Bhagtani in Marwar; Basavis in Karnataka and Rayalaseema regions of Andhra Pradesh; Devaradiyar in Tamil Nadu; and as Kudikkar in Travancore regions.

Of several women associated with the temple, the sānis who were proficient enough in dance and music played a significant role in the temple history of Andhra Pradesh. In the historic past it was a practice for the kings, chiefs, nobles as well as common folk to donate girls of tender age to the temples either to earn religious merit or to fulfill a vow taken earlier. In the inscriptions the term sānis is referred to with various synonyms. There are seven types of dēvadāsis on the basis of recruitment and in most of the cases the donors made adequate provision for the maintenance of dancing girls endowed by them.

Sānis formed themselves into a corporate body to safeguard their interests. They belonged to different castes and ranks. Moreover, they often hailed from respectable families and were married and had sons with higher positions in the ladder of social status. There are also instances of either the bhōga-strīs of the chiefs and kings or their daughters, and daughters and grand-daughters of dance masters serving in the temples as sānis.

Temple girls were provided with sufficient means for their livelihood. Kings, chiefs and rich devotees made arrangements by way of granting villages, lands, money, houses, sheep etc., apart from annual wages. As a result, the sānis could enjoy respect and their music and dance were capable of winning the hearts of common folk and leading them on the path of devotion. Some of them also could become wealthy and made munificent grants to temples. However, serious degeneration has thrown this profession from the high pedestal of sanctity to dust in course of time due to historical reasons.

It is reported that there are as many as 15,850 Basavis, mainly in Rayalaseema and Telangana regions of Andhra Pradesh. Like in Karnataka, in Andhra Pradesh also the institution of

Basavi refers to an age-old practice of dedication for life of young girls to familial deities whereby the consecrated women are incapacitated to contract a legal wedlock. An intensive study of Basavis in Kurnool district reveals that most of them belong to Scheduled Caste families whose custom is to dedicate a daughter as Basavi to perpetuate the patrilineal line, when there is no male heir in the family or to fulfil a vow taken at the time of family distress or to obtain a relief or cure from a disease. In addition, there are instances of dedicating girls, when the parents could not get their daughters married due to financial constraints.

The initiation rites are usually conducted at the age of eight or ten and correspond to the Hindu marriage ceremony. The girls are dedicated to various domestic deities of both the genders. The mode and details of dedication and worship differ depending upon the deity of dedication. The tāli is tied by the maternal uncle or Bayannāyana or Dāsaraiah or senior Basavi. A dedicated girl permanently stays in her parental home and practises marital relations with a person of equal or superior caste. A Basavi often lives in concubinage with one or more men. It is also noticed that the concubinage with other than one's own maternal uncle is

usually short-lived. A paramour gives his concubine a weekly or monthly sum towards her maintenance. She is not, however, despised in the society. No stigma attaches to the Basavis or their children and they are received on terms of equality by other members of the caste.

A Basavi is believed to be immune from widowhood and she is often the most welcome guest at weddings and is usually regarded as bearer of good luck. Moreover, she enjoys masculine privileges by inheriting parental property and performing their funeral rites as if she were a son; her children belong to the lineage of their mother and not to the lineage of their biological father. Several factors - (1) the desire to perpetuate the patrilineage or economic hardships, (2) cultural values with an economic or prestige base, and (3) the age-old beliefs, legends and myths - are responsible for the origin, proliferation and perpetuation of the Basavi system.

With the passage of time the Basavi system has got degenerated and the socio-economic life of the Basavis is miserable. Hence, with a view to emancipating them from the age-old shackles, both the Government and voluntary bodies started launching various welfare measures a few years ago.

Apart from banning the practice legally, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has implemented such measures of rehabilitation as vocational training, skill development, self-employment and income generation, distribution of milch animals, allotment of house-sites, construction of pucca buildings, payment of pension to the aged Basavis etc,. Similarly, to supplement the efforts of the Government by filling up the gaps a few organisations of social service also demonstrated their deep concern at the plight of the Basavis and undertook several welfare schemes such as imparting vocational training, running adult education centres, holding meetings at national, regional and local levels, arranging the enactment of playlets etc,.

A critical evaluation of impact of various developmental programmes reveals that almost all schemes have been enthusiastically received by the beneficiaries and the latter are not unduly tradition-bound and empathetic to induced change. However, the welfare measures hitherto undertaken are inadequate in view of the magnitude of the problem. Lack of commitment and corruption on the part of some Government personnel, absence of foresight at the time of formulating policies are some of the loopholes of welfare programmes. There is a dire need, therefore, to empower the down-trodden

Basavis through an integrated approach for any promoter of induced change. It is anticipated that the Government would soon take up the task of ICDS programme by covering a network of services that would benefit both the Basavis and their children. Apart from making use of both mass and traditional folk media to propagate the evil consequences of the system, need-based new schemes are also to be taken up for an overall and speedy socio-economic advancement of the Basavis.

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APPENDIX

FORMAT OF SCHEDULE

BASAVI SYSTEM IN ANDHRA PRADESH

(With special Reference to Kurnool District)

Schedule No: Mandal:
Place of Interview: District:

1. Full Name of the informant:

2. Age:

3. Level of
Education:

4. Caste:

5. Native Place:

6. Mandal:

7. How many children do you have?

Male

Female

Education

8. Name of the father:

9. Name of the mother:

10. Was your grand-mother also a Basavi?
If yes, specify the reason.

Yes/No

11. Is your mother also a Basavi?
If yes, specify the reason

Yes/No

12. How many sibblings do you have?

Brothers: Younger/Elder

Sisters: Younger/Elder

13. To which deity were you dedicated?

a) Timmappa

f) Bochhulamma

l) Mallalamma

b) Anjaneya

g) Jambulamma

m) Tikkalakshamma

c) Ellamma

h) Kosigi Yellamma

d) Kolhapuramma

i) Tayamma

n) Vrukunda Eranna

e) Maremma

j) Sunkulamma

o) Lord Venkateswara

k) Pedda Uligamma

p) others (specify)

II

14. What relationship did you have with the deity prior to the dedication?
- a) Family God/Goddess
 - b) Local God/Goddess
 - c) Village God/Goddess
 - d) Caste deity
15. At what age were you dedicated?years.
16. What was the reason/s for the dedication?
- a) Poverty
 - b) Custom of the family
 - c) Wrath of the deity
 - d) Handicappedness
 - e) Unmarried for many years
 - f) To have male children
 - g) only daughter/s in the family
 - h) Childhood disease (Specify)
 - i) Father's/Mother's illhealth (Specify)
 - j) Toward of calamity at family/Village level
 - k) Physical/mental illness of sibblings
 - l) Others (Specify)
17. Were you dedicated on any special day? Yes/No
If yes, specify the day and reason.
18. Who performed the 'marriage' with the deity?
- a) Jangamaiah
 - b) Dasaraiah
 - c) Others (specify)
19. Who tied the sacred 'tali' on behalf of the deity?
- a) Maternal uncle
 - b) A relative
 - c) Bayannayana
 - d) Another Basavi
 - e) Others (Specify)
20. Who advised your parents to dedicate you to the deity?
- a) neighbours
 - b) Landlord
 - c) Others
21. Where were you dedicated?
- a) Village temple
 - b) Any special place (Specify)
22. Who accompanied you at the time of dedication?
- a) relatives
 - b) friends
 - c) neighbours
23. Describe the mode of initiation, giving details about the dress, time etc.?

III

24. Did you remain as concubine right from the day of your dedication? Yes/No
If yes, specify with whom and for how long
25. How much did your 'husband' pay at the time of initiation?
26. Mention the caste, occupation and economic position of your husband/paramour.
- | | <u>Caste</u> | <u>Occupation</u> | <u>Economic position</u> |
|---------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 1st 'husband' | | | |
| 2nd 'husband' | | | |
| 3rd 'husband' | | | |
27. How many children did, you have through your first/second/third 'husband'?
28. Do you still wear the prescribed dress and ornaments? Yes/No
29. Do you still worship the deity to whom you were dedicated? Yes/No
30. Do you still go for begging for three/five/all days during Sankranti/throughout the year
If yes, specify how much do you get by way of begging?
31. Do you still participate in the Jatara of Ellamma? Yes/No
32. Do you take rounds around the temple of Uligamma without any dress at the time of Jatara?

IV

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE BASAVIS PRIOR TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WELFARE PROGRAMMES

33. How was your economic position prior to the implementation of welfare programmes?
very bad/bad/good/satisfactory
34. What was your occupation? Primary/Secondary
a) Working in ginning factory d) Casual labourer
b) Selling of grass e) begging
c) Agricultural labour
35. How much was your income per day ?
per day/month/year
36. Did you have any landed property? Yes/No
If yes, specify the acreage of wet/dry land
37. Did you have your own house? Yes/No
If yes, specify the type of house Pucca/semi-pucca/hut.
38. How did you feel about your life?
Satisfactory/dissatisfactory/very bad

WELFARE PROGRAMMES

39. What benefit did you get from the Government?
a) house d) Sheep units
b) land e) others (specify)
c) milch animals
40. In which skill were you trained?
a) Tailoring d) Soap-making
b) Poultry keeping e) Others (specify)
c) Chalk-piece making
41. How much stipend were you given during the training period?
and for how long Rs.....months.....
42. What Welfare Scheme have you taken up?
a) Soap-making d) Animal husbandry
b) Tailoring e) Chalkpiece-making
c) Book-binding f) Others (specify)

43. How much do you earn now ? Per day Rs.....
Per month Rs.....
44. What more do you expect from the Government?
a) Widow Pension
b) Reservation for the children in educational Institutions
and employment.
c) Free board and lodging.
d) Other incentives (specify)
45. Do you know that the Basavi custom has been legally prohibited? Yes/No
46. Do you want to give up the custom? Yes/No
If yes, specify the reason
47. Do your children also want to discontinue the practice? Yes/No
If yes, specify the reason?
48. Do you marry any person who comes forward to marry you? Yes/No
49. Do you want to educate your children? Yes/No.
50. How do you feel about your present life?
Very happy/happy/unhappy/satisfactory

Remarks of the interviewer:-